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SONGS OF THE NORTH AMER.
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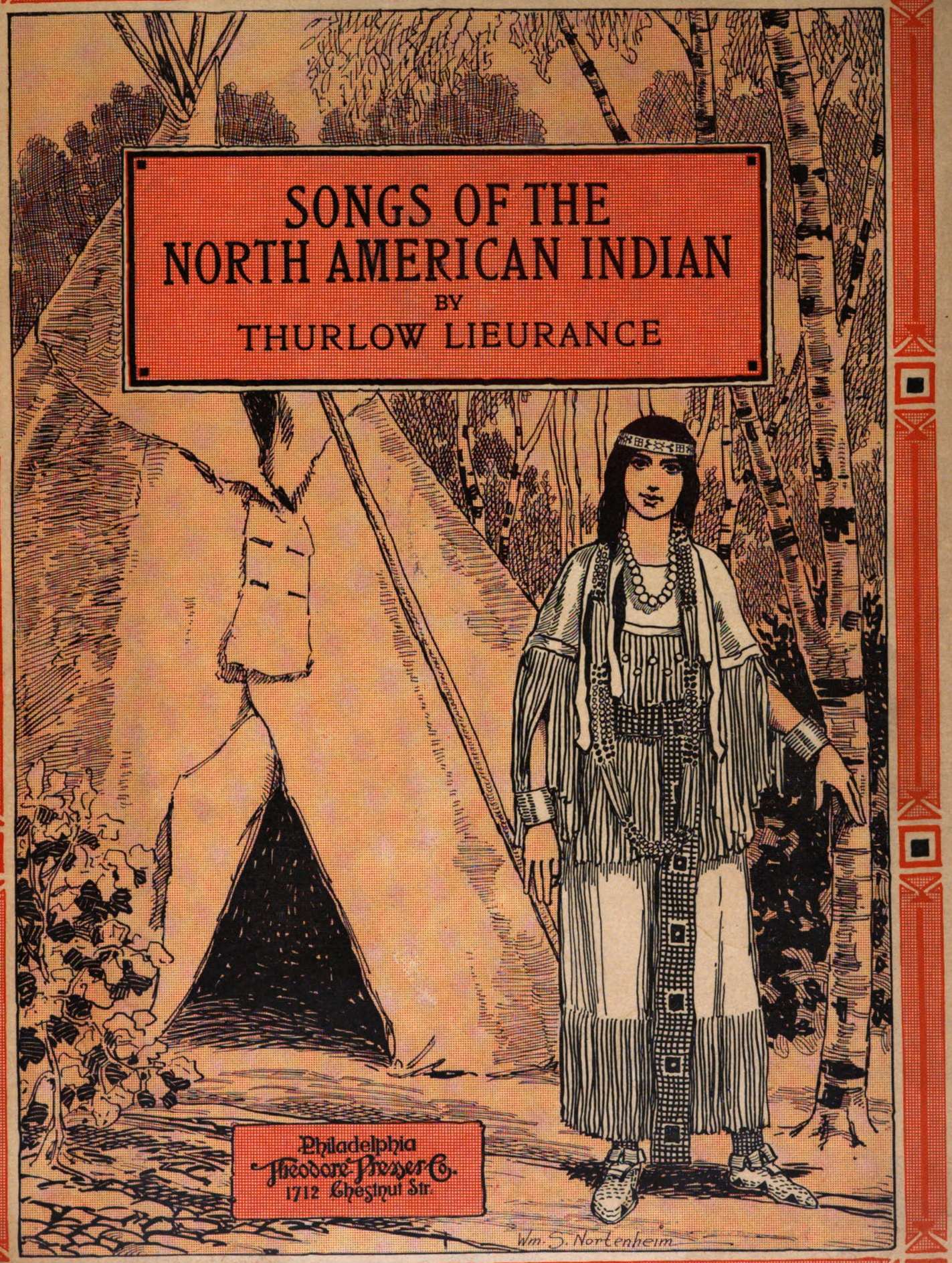

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SONGS
OF THE
NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

WITH PREFACE AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

BY

THURLOW LIEURANCE

PRICE, $1.50

Philadelphia
Theodore Presser Co.
1712 Chestnut Str.

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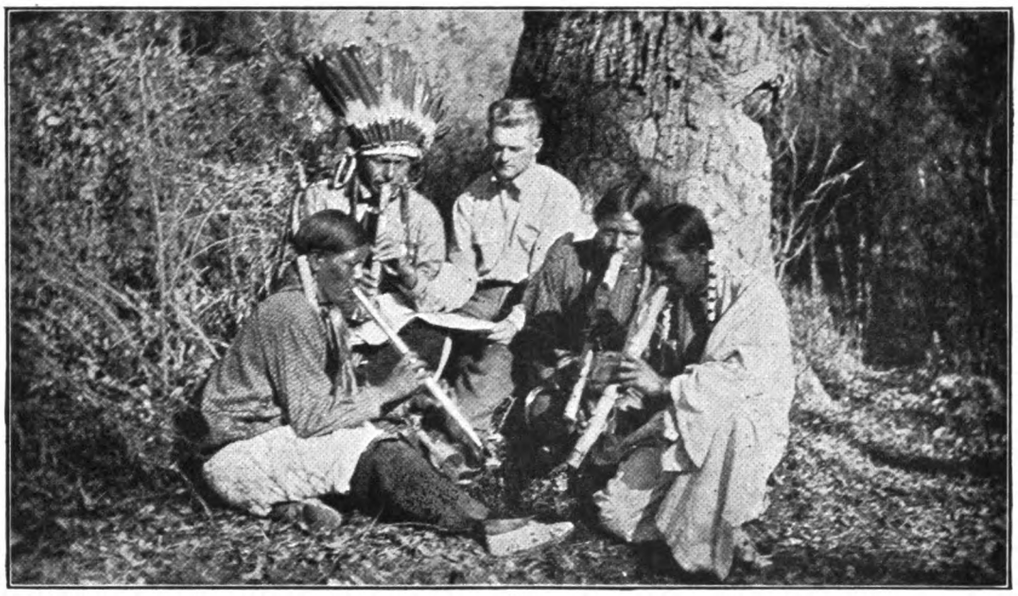

PREFACE

One midsummer's night, almost a score of years ago, I sat in front of a little hunting tent I had pitched near an Indian village in the far West. The Indians were having one of their pow-wows, I thought; for drums were beating a monotonous accompaniment to some sort of a chant, or droning song, relieved or accentuated by an occasional high, piercing measure. The Indian sounds came through the night with insistent clamor. Like many another, I had indifferently "passed up" Indian music as meaningless jumble, not worthy of serious study, save as a curiosity. But this night, more to get away from myself than from any sympathetic reason I began to follow the sounds, to try and resolve them into order (if they had any), to catch a theme or motive, if any lay hidden. Fortunately for me, about this time a new voice took up the lead and was presently singing alone. I jotted down the motive as I got it—stripped of many—to me—meaningless meanderings and tiresome curlicues. Then I walked over to the tepee from which the sounds were issuing. The firegleam lit up the face of the soloist, so that some yards away I recognized the parchment skinned, not overly tidy old buck with whom I had had some dealings about game a day or so before. He stopped when I came up. Not knowing Indian ways and nature at that time, without any preliminaries I asked him to sing that song again. He grunted and fell back into the baffling head-shake and *"no save"* and utter stupidity which apparently every Indian can put on when he wants to.

Indian music impressed me at first as monotonous. disagreeable even. Do you recall your first hearing of Wagner? Until one's ear becomes somewhat attuned to them, the recondite harmonies of Dubussy, Strauss and the modernists seem strained and nerve-racking. But I caught something of the beauty of that first Indian song. Presently I was searching the haunts and habitat of the red man, luring his confidence, making love to his babies (the surest way to his heart), giving him little presents and tokens of good will, and above all—far above all—showing him that his beloved songs were not to me either themes for idle curiosity or condescension. I wish I could take you even through words, with me to the various tribes, among these primitive, interesting and in many respects wonderful people. But I can only in this little volume give you a faint idea of some of their songs, which I have harmonized according to our modern scales and with our musical notation. The music of the Indian is his true heart—speech. There is no false passion, no eroticism, no cloying, sugary phrase or theme in the Indian music. It is as fresh and fragrant as the prairie and the mountain of which he sings. It is simple with the simplicity of truth.

More than those of any other peoples since the Egyptians, every act, ceremony and circumstance, characteristic of Indian life, have corresponding musical settings, expressed and given force and idealism through some combination of tones. The Indian's harvest will not ripen without an invocation to the guardian deity; his children will sicken and die unless the evil spirits are driven away by a beneficient god to whom he chants his appeal. The birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, the stream, the cloud, the storm, all the forms and manifestations of nature with whom he is ever at grips and upon whose favor his very life depends, each has a musical embodiment. His spiritual being is fed by music. Ofttimes he will dress for these chants and ceremonies in a manner which to us seems gaudy, grotesque and altogether ridiculous. His God is, as ours, the giver of life; is pleased with beauty and the homage of his children; responds to supplication; is filled with wrath at transgressions and must be appeased. Yet, after all, are there not, in civilized life, many functions in which music, ornaments and ceremonial combine in lavish degree?

The best music of the American Indian is found in his religious and ceremonial songs and the melodies which he plays on his only musical instrument—the flute. Different tribes make flutes with different scales and for different purposes. For instance, the Cheyennes use a five-toned scale similar to the Chinese. They also make flutes to imitate the songs of different birds. They make a flute to imitate the call of the night owl, or

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song of death. The Sioux, Kiowas, and the Osages use a six-toned flute similar to the flageolet. The Hopis use a four-toned flute, formerly made out of bone. Many Pueblo tribes use a four, five and six-toned flute. I have employed mostly the flute melodies and the love songs and some ceremonial songs in my harmonized versions. They are best fitted to our scales. Different tribes use different syllables to intone their songs. For instance, I heard members of three different tribes sing the same song. One tribe sang with a *Yo-Ho-Yo-ho-Yo,* another sang with *Ha-ya-ha-ya-la-ya-ha-yah-e-ho;* the other sang with *hi-ya-hi-ya-hi-ya.* Each had a different vocal placement and all sing naturally, for hours seemingly without tiring.

There are songs about the ghosts, the storm, the wind, the sun, the animals and the trees. There are many beautiful legends connected with the songs. The Indians believe that the pines whisper and sing and if you will listen you will hear them. Should you tell your sorrows to them they will whisper comfort. There are many songs about the eagle because it is worshipped by all Indians. It is the only bird that can fly directly into the face of the sun. The Indians believe that all power of life comes from the sun, that he is their God, and the earth their Mother, and the eagle the living spirit of both. There are songs used for the healing of the sick and the medicine men possess these. They claim to get their power of healing from certain animals. They also believe that the thunder, lightning and the storms have power to heal. They have many scalp-dance songs and other songs of victory. Mourning, popular dance-songs, gambling songs are common, also working songs, like the corn-grinding songs of the Pueblo Indians.

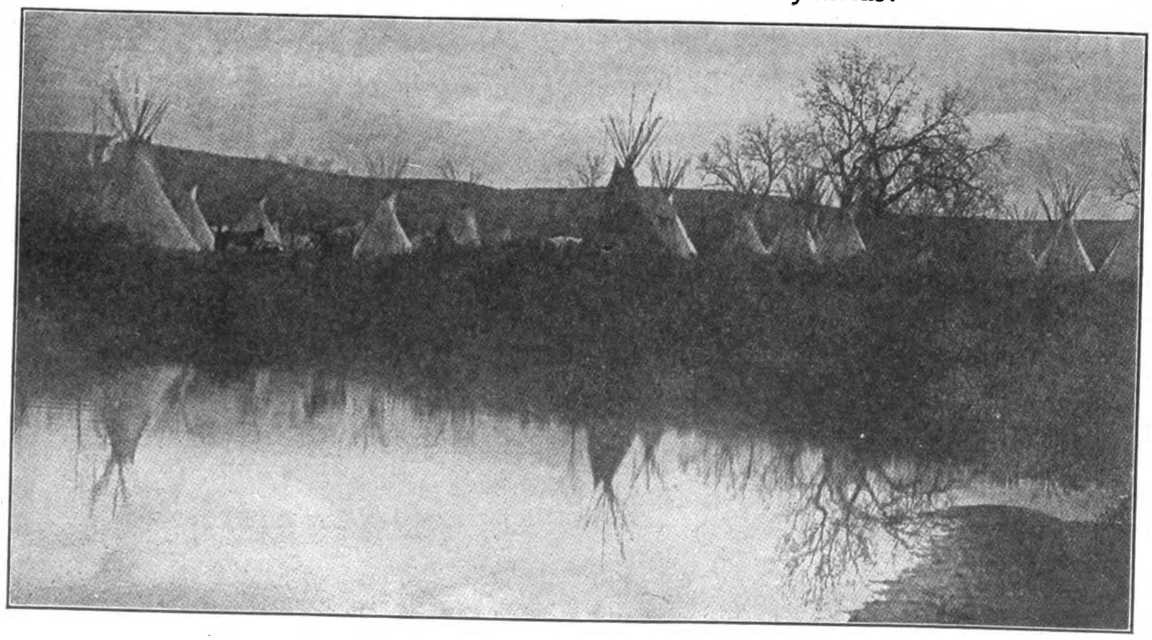
When the white man discovered the North American continent, he found himself in the presence of a man, not a picturesque type. Skilled in warfare, he was master of his own potentialities. He was a trader, an orator and a friend. As he came into contact with the white man he surrendered many of his qualities; and his brooding over this fact has placed him where he is today. Nevertheless many of his people have arisen and see the new vision. I will quote from the speech of an old chief to illustrate:

"Do you see the whites living upon the seeds while we eat flesh, that each of the wonderful seeds they sow in the earth returns to them a hundredfold? The flesh on which we subsist has four legs on which to escape while we have but two with which to persue and capture it. The grain remains where the white men plant it and it grows. With them winter is a period of rest, while with us it is a time of laborious hunting. I say, therefore, unto every one that will hear me, that before the cedars of your village shall have died down with age and the maple trees of the valley have ceased to give us sugar, the race of the little brown seed eaters will exterminate the race of the flesh eaters, provided their huntsmen do not become sowers."

In conclusion, let me tell you in Sioux what a friend would say to one who is interested in his welfare, art, music and folklore:

"Kola! Chantie oon co euopopie
Minnehaha sea io chi pie!
Chan-ta-ki-ie-la!
Kola wi ota!"

"Friends! Sunshine in our hearts!
Happy like laughing water!
I love you!
Many moons!"



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SONGS OF
THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

CONTENTS

BY THE WATERS OF MINNETONKA 18
BY THE WEEPING WATERS 23
CANOE SONG 6
DYING MOON FLOWER 16
FROM AN INDIAN VILLAGE 10
FROM GHOST DANCE CANYON 26
IN MIRRORED WATERS 31
INDIAN SPRING BIRD 36
ROSE ON AN INDIAN GRAVE, A 13

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CANOE SONG

(INDIAN LOVE)

From a story told by
"MEDICINE MOON"

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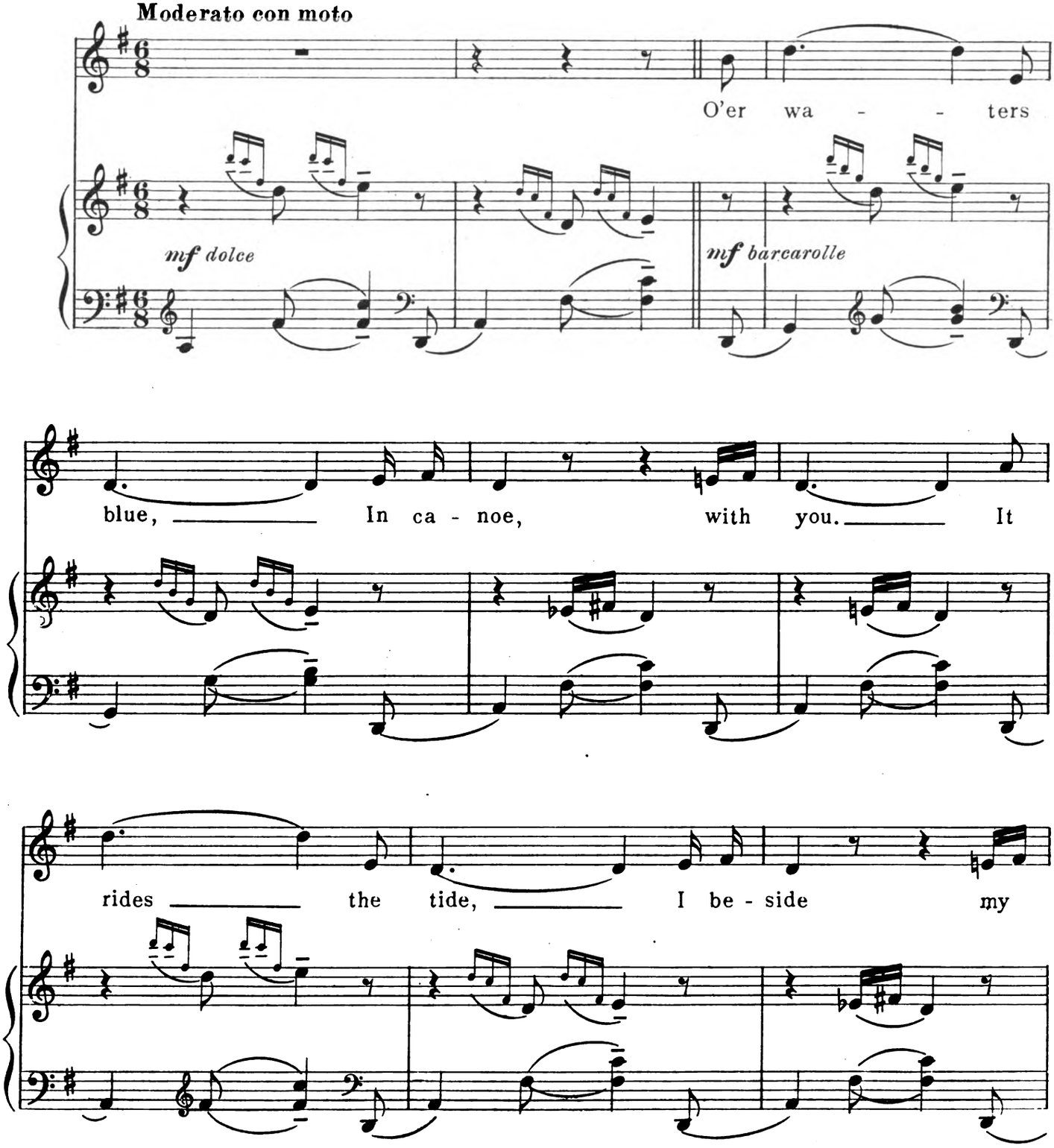

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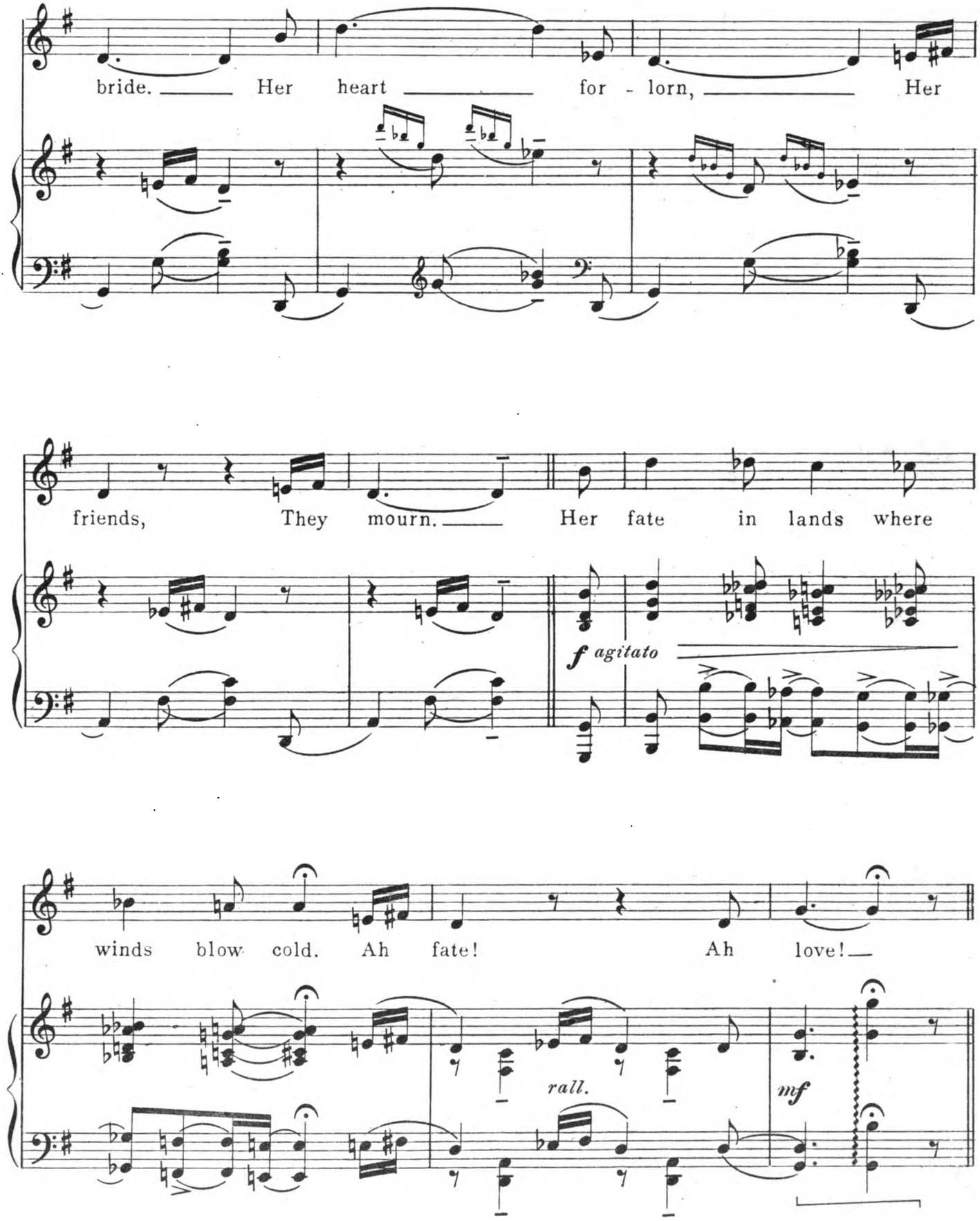

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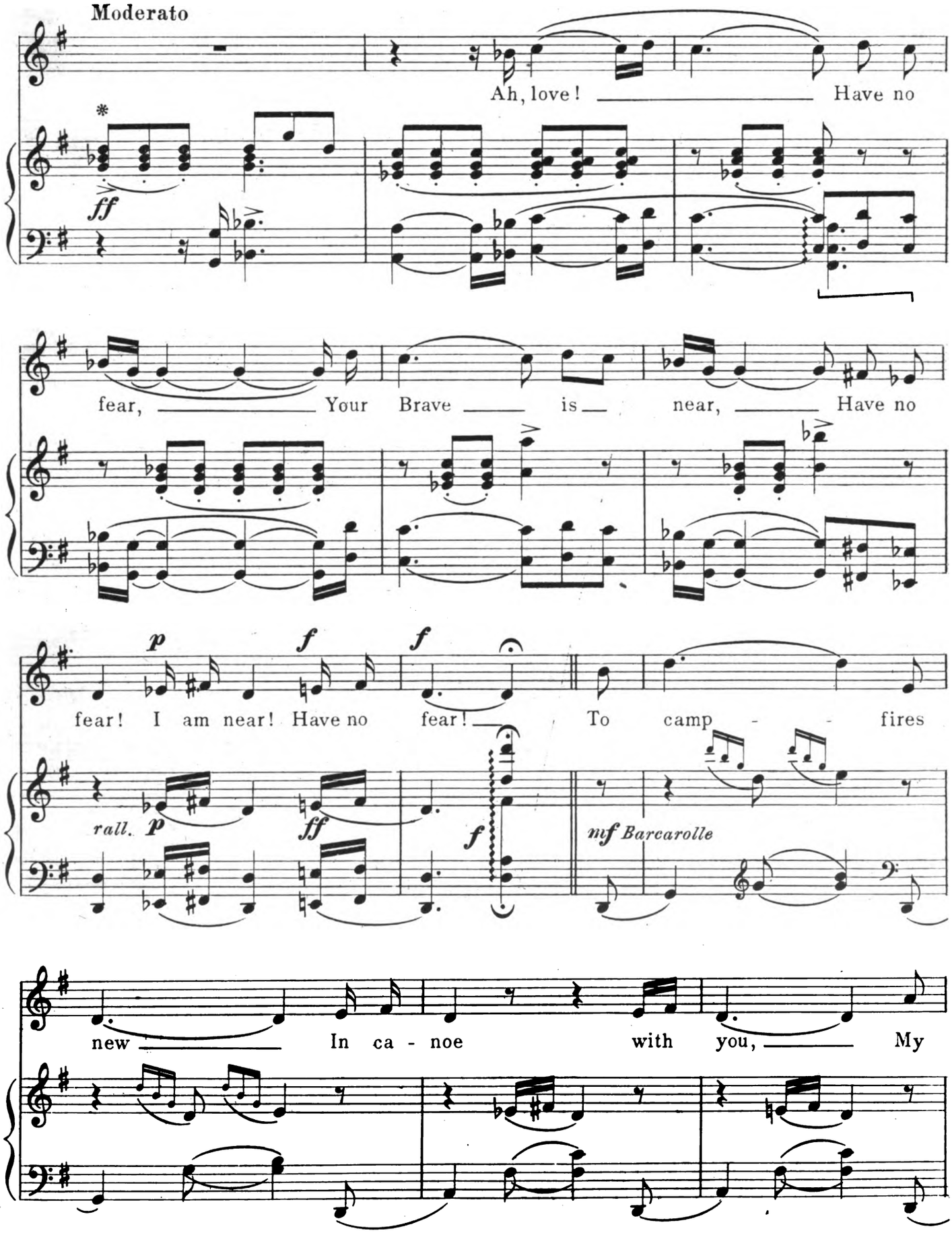

* An Indian love song, sung for me, by Geo. La Mere, a Winnebago Indian is woven into the *Moderato*.

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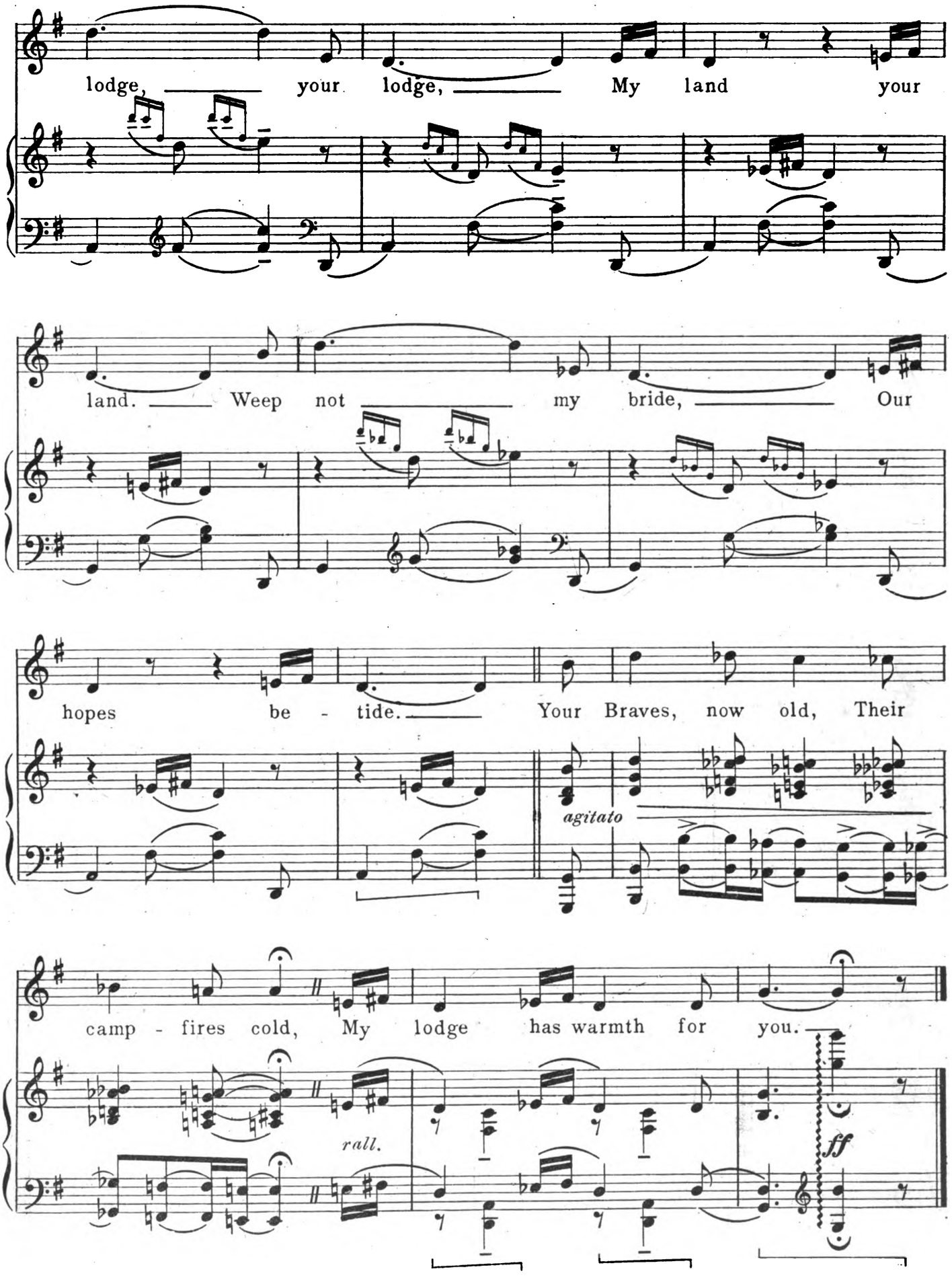

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FROM AN INDIAN VILLAGE

A suggestion from
GRINNELL'S BLACKFOOT TALES

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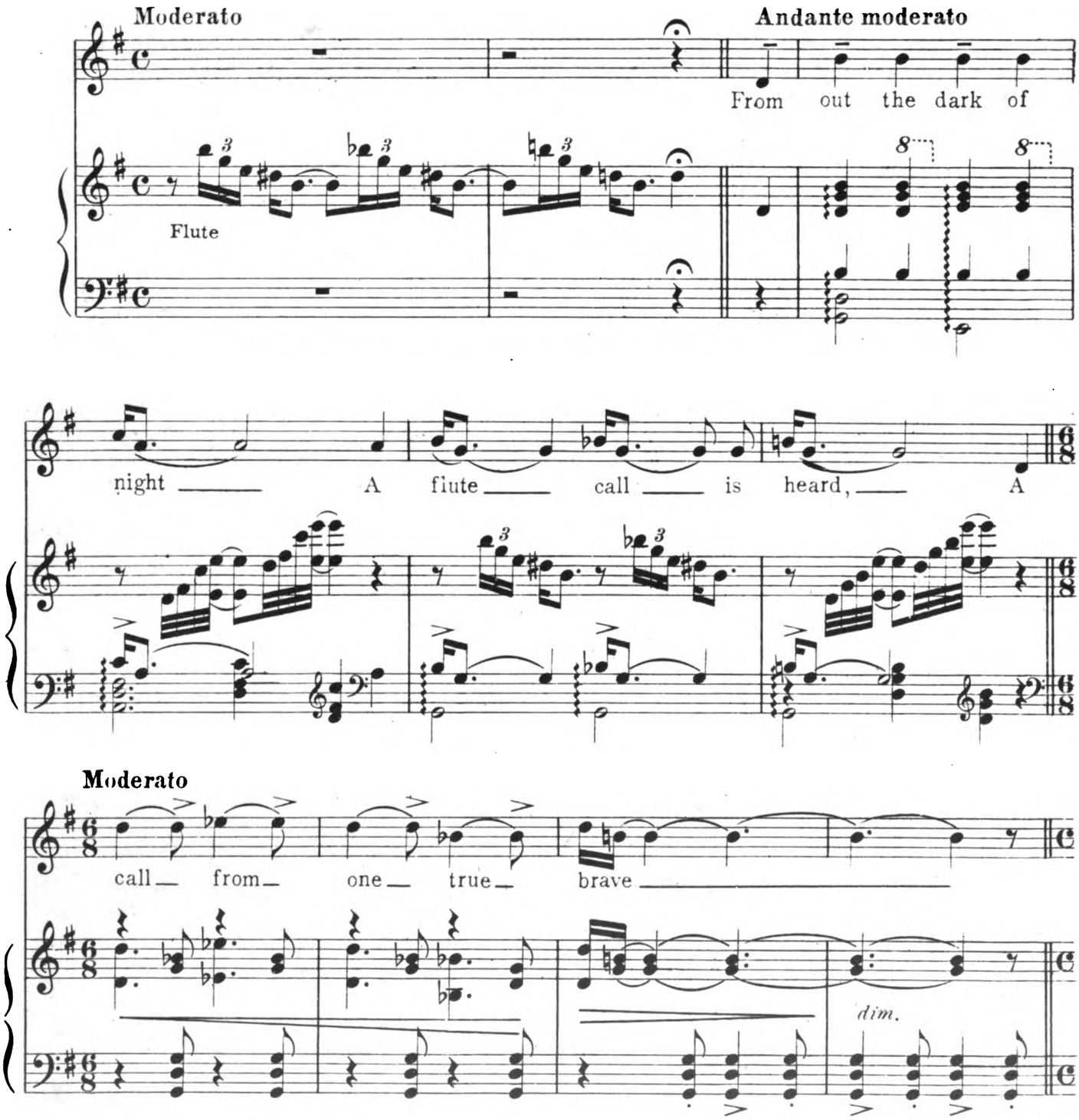

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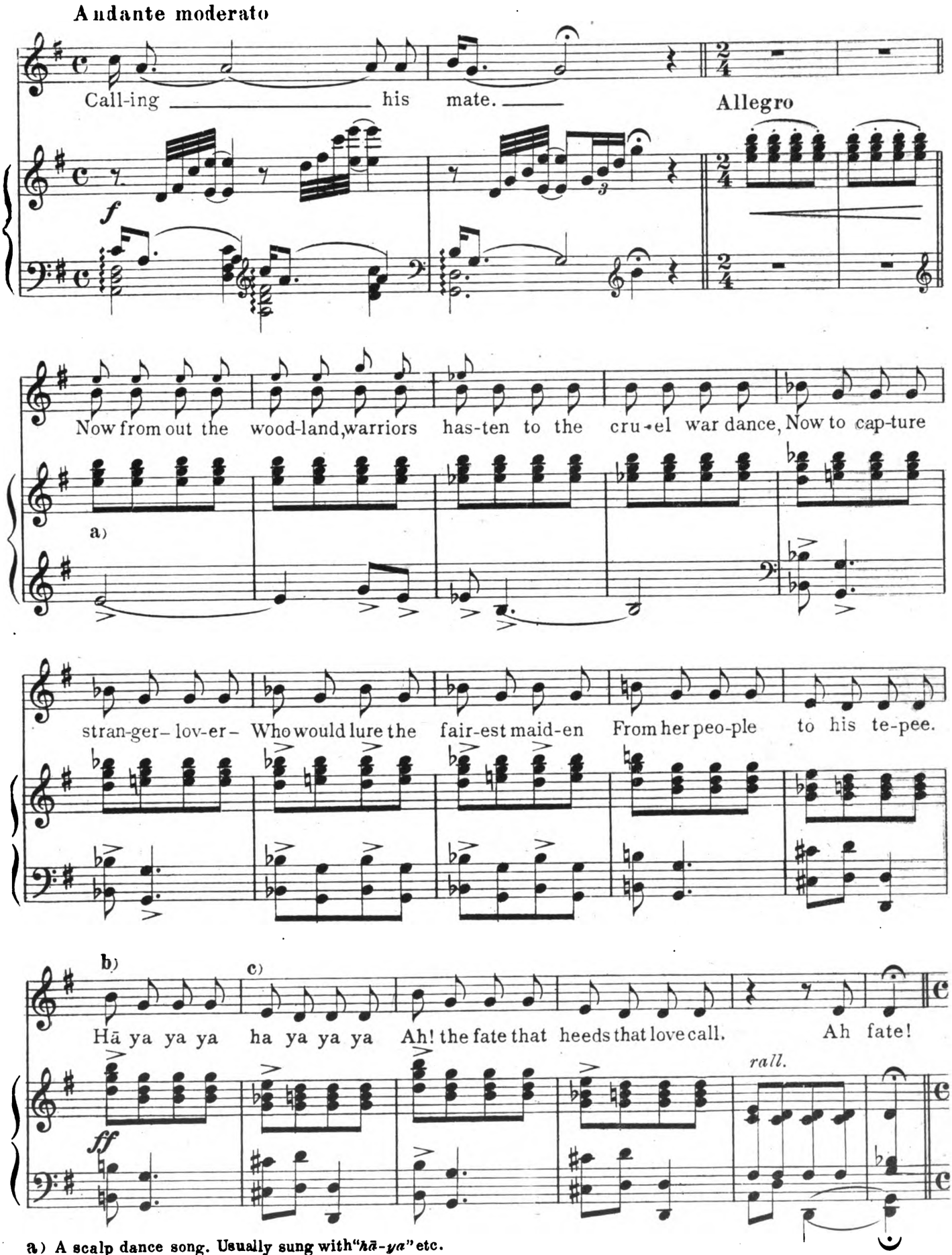

a) A scalp dance song. Usually sung with "*hā-ya*" etc.
b) May be sung by chorus in distance.
c) Solo voice again.

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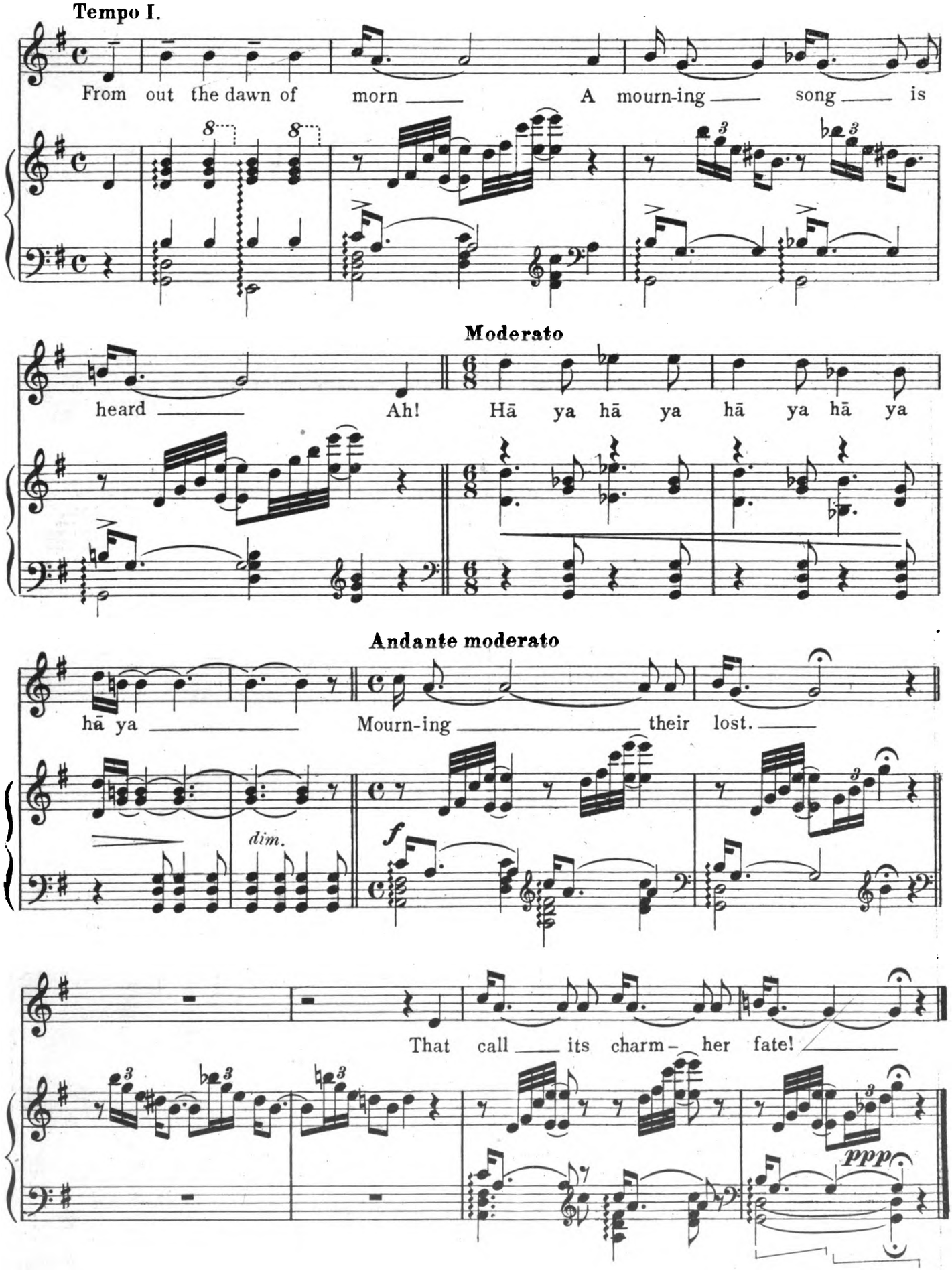

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A ROSE ON AN INDIAN GRAVE

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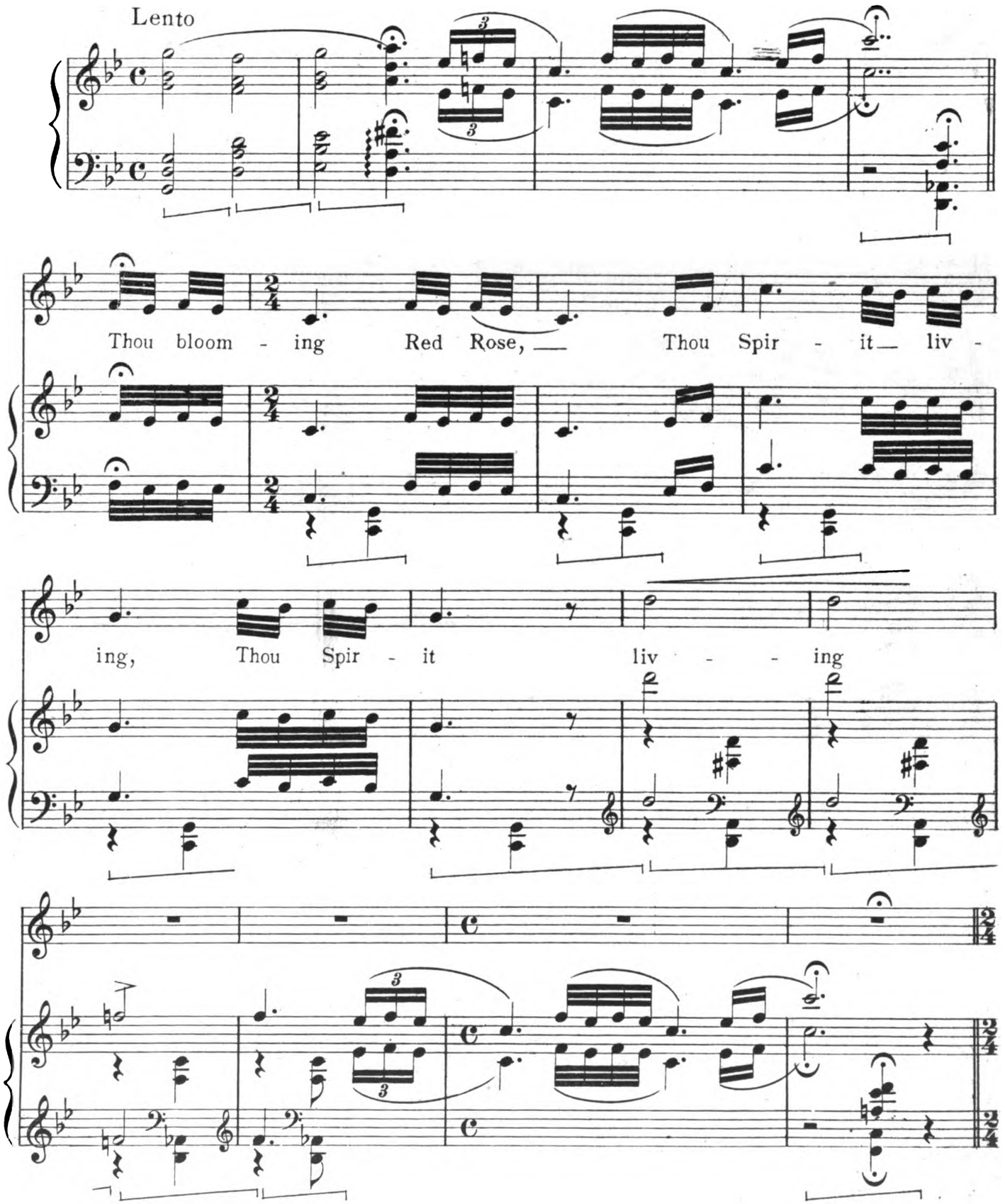

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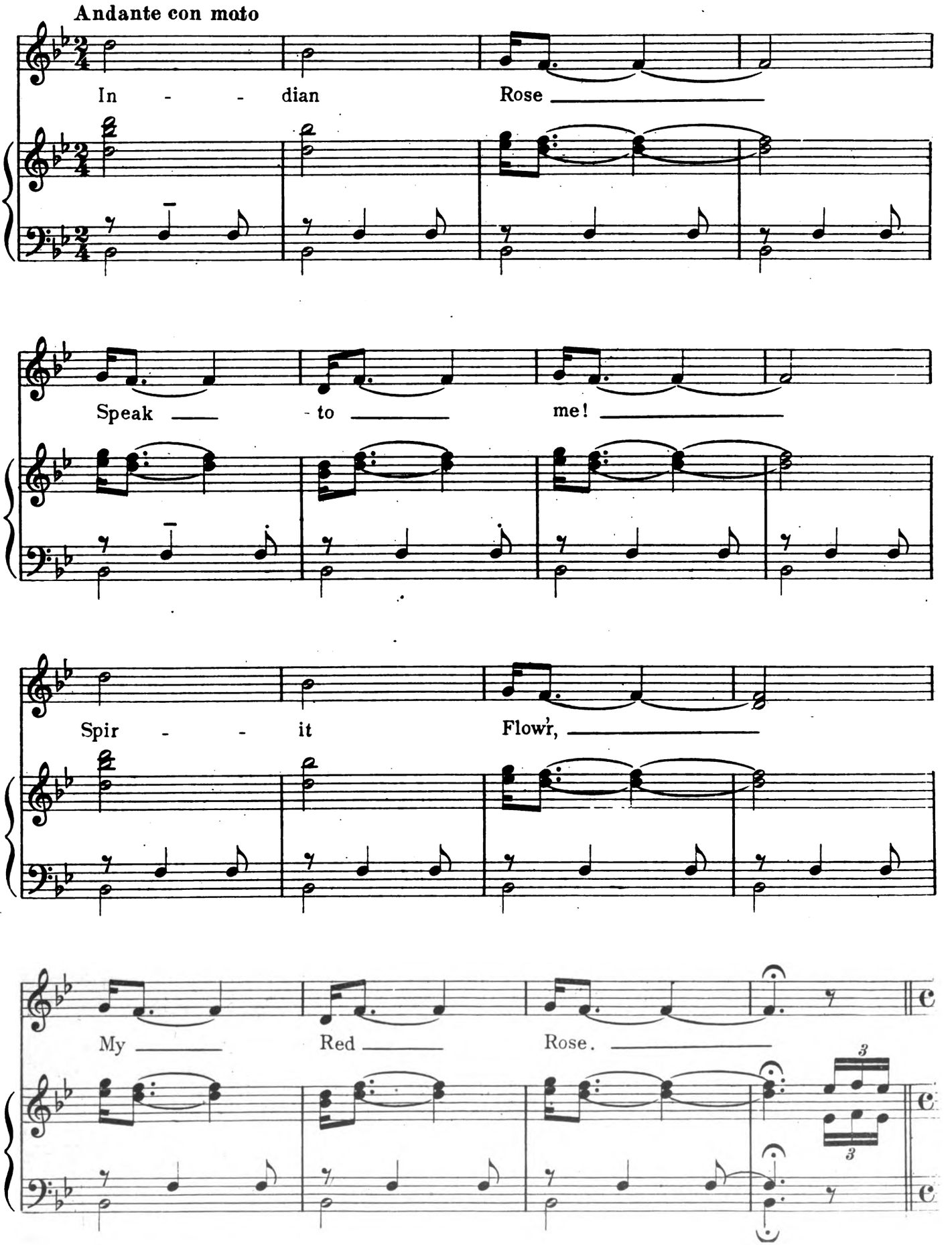

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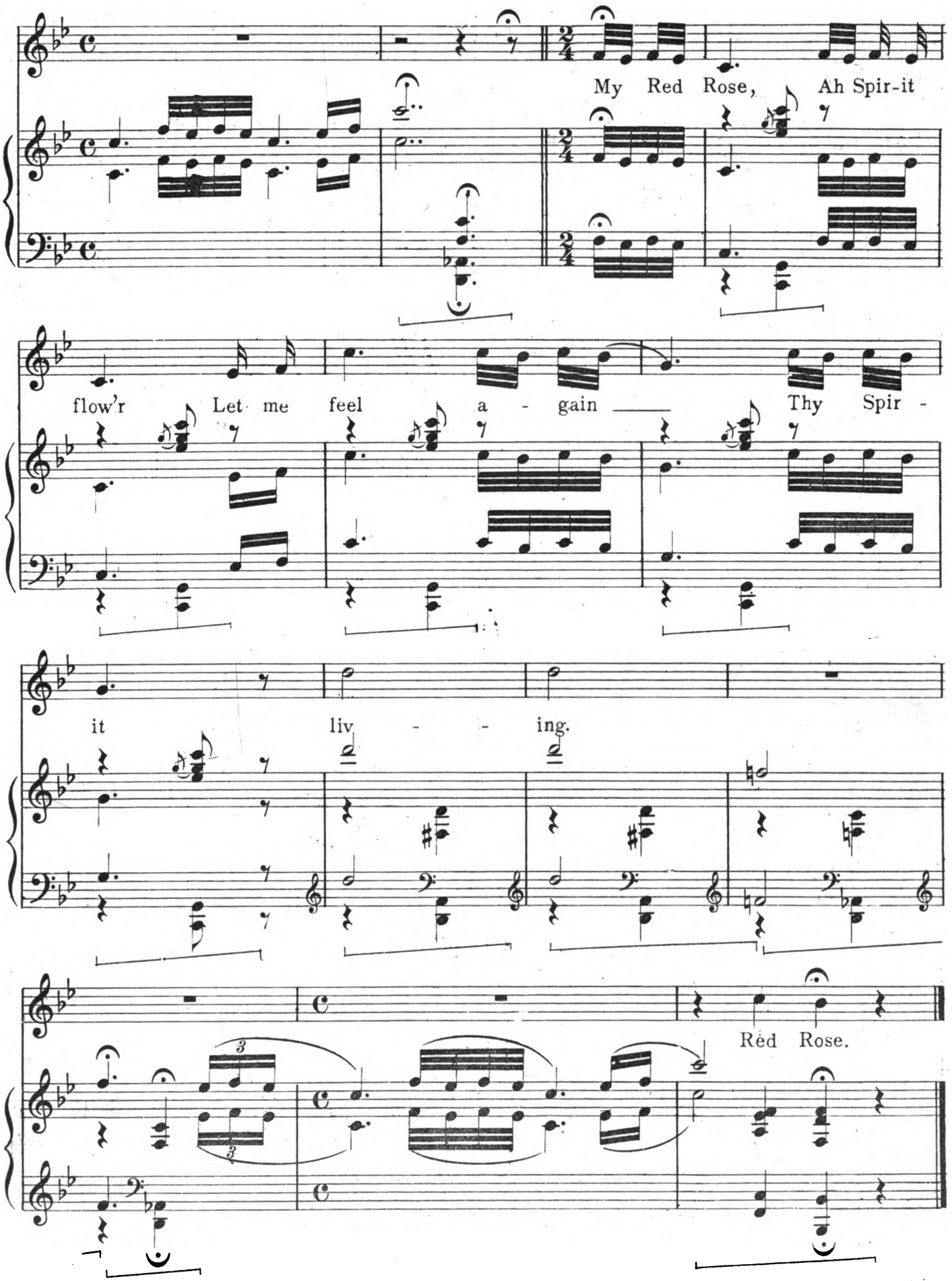

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DYING MOON-FLOWER

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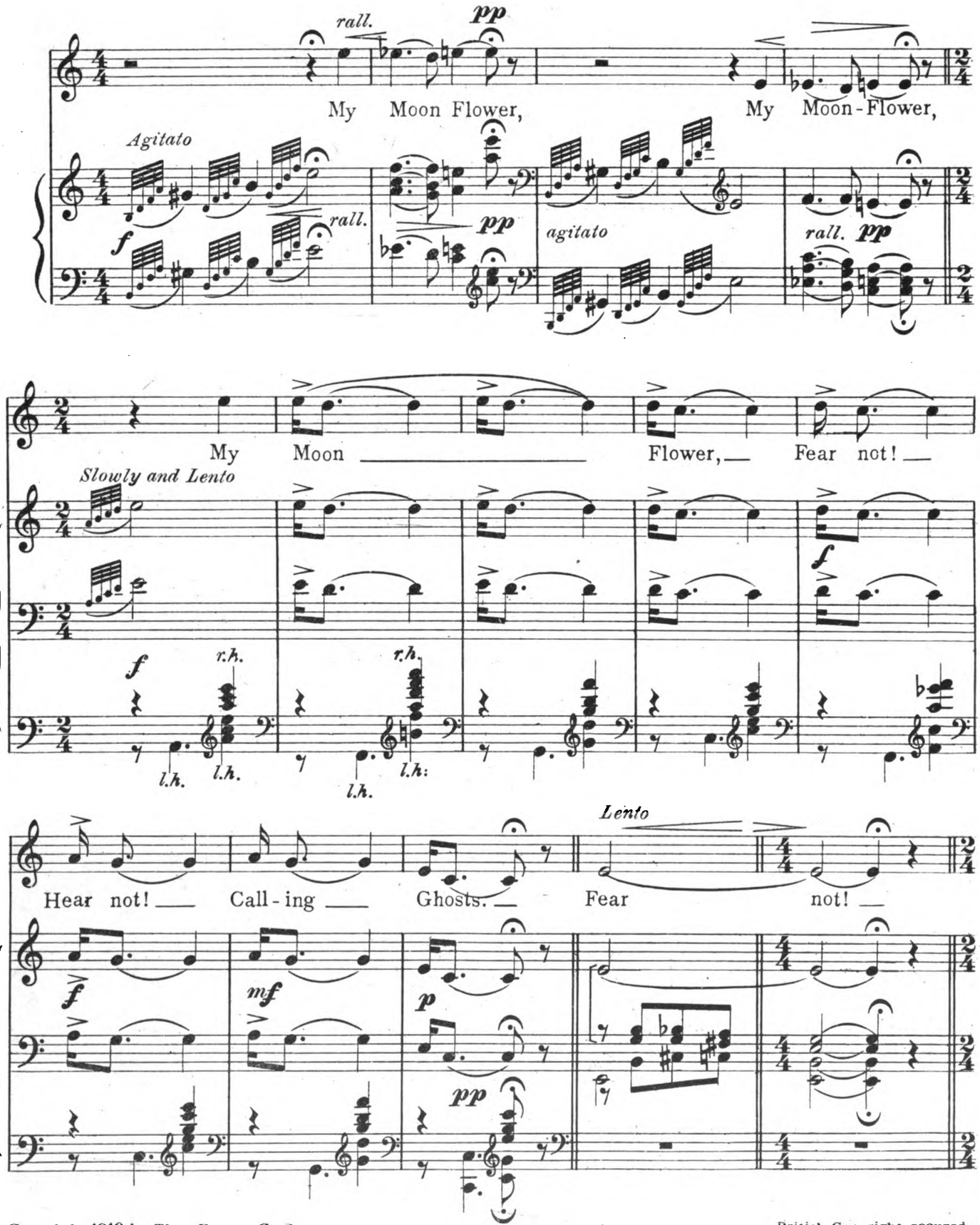

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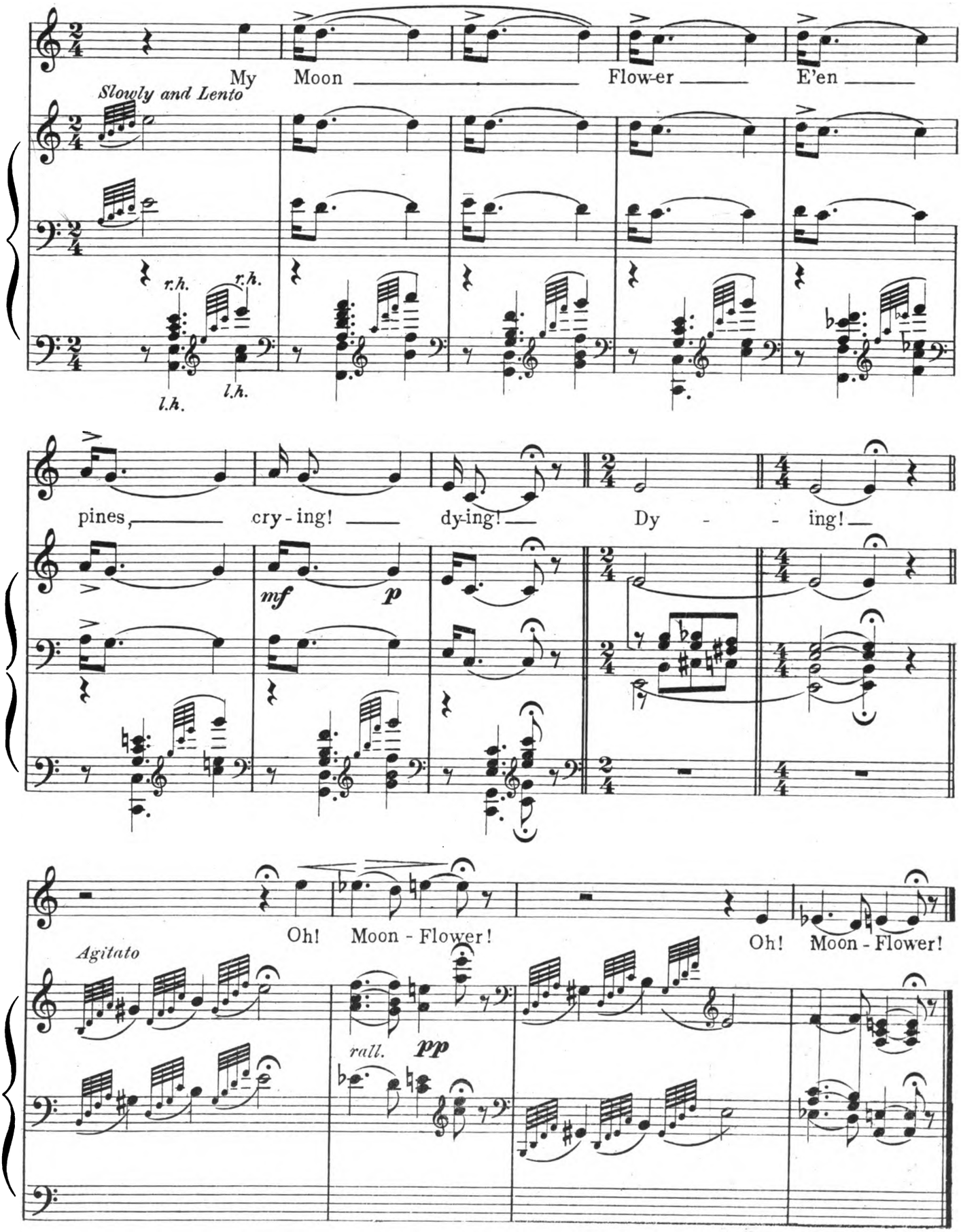

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To Mr. Alfred Williams

"By the Waters of Minnetonka"

An Indian Love Song

J. M. CAVANASS

Andante moderato

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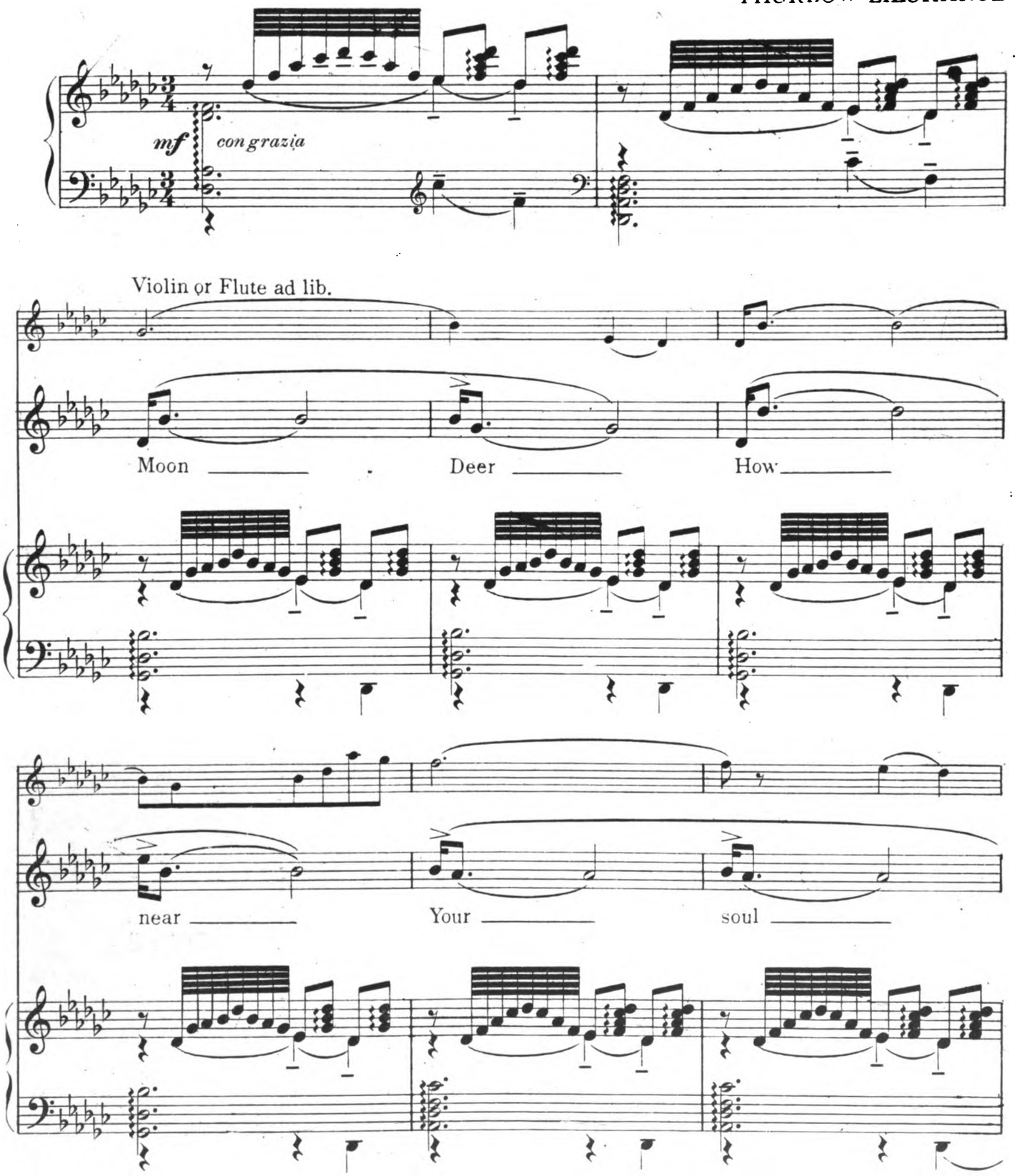

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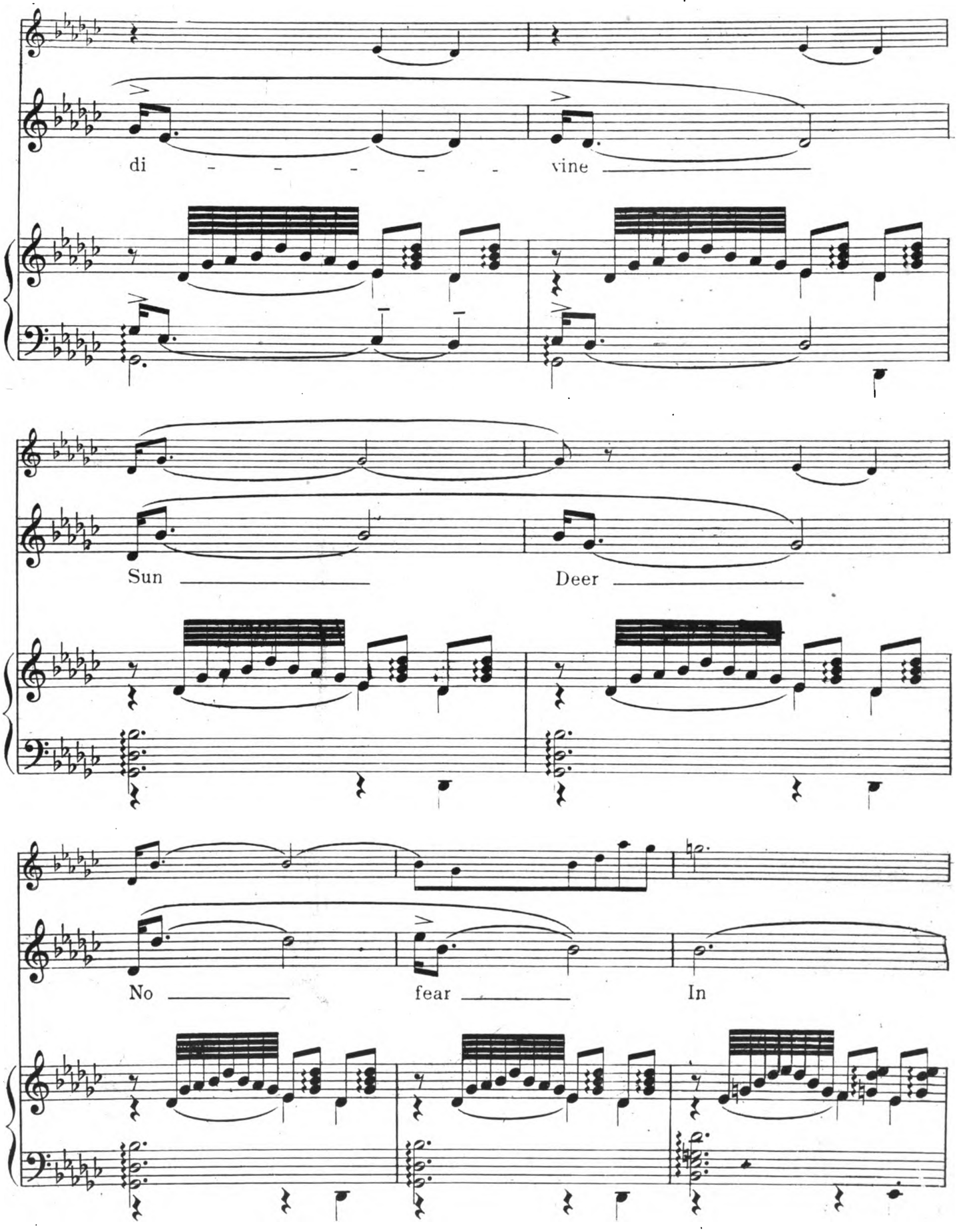

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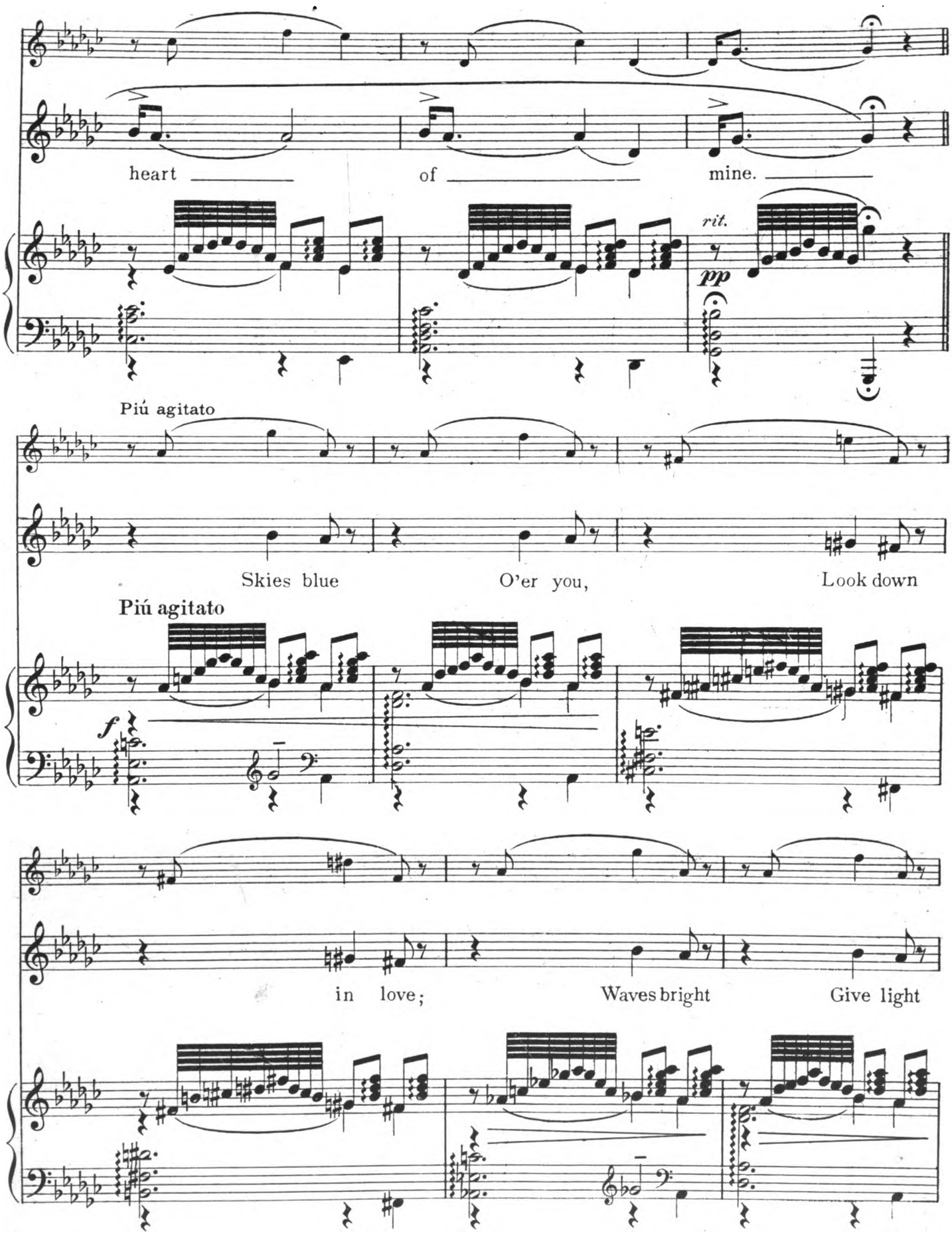

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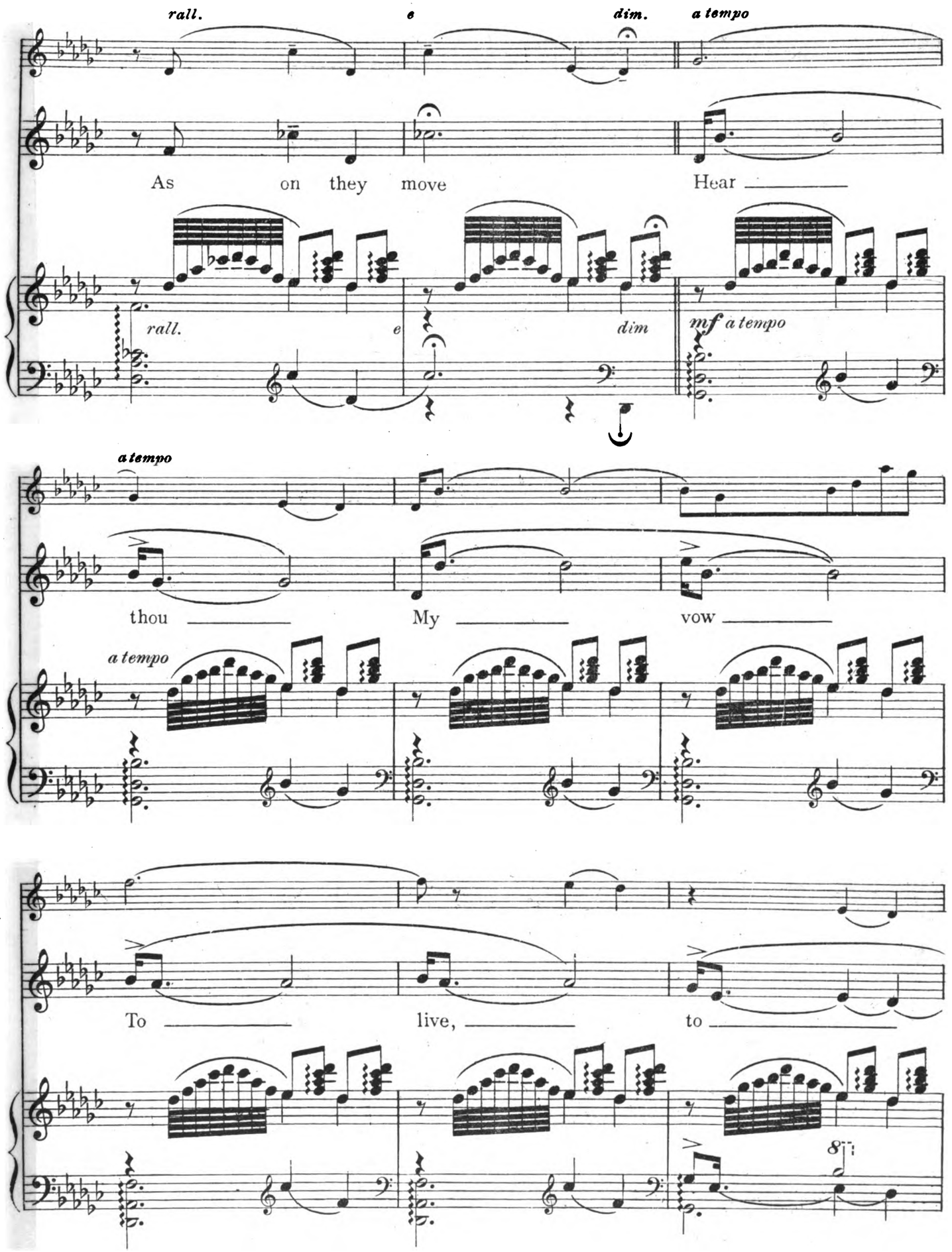

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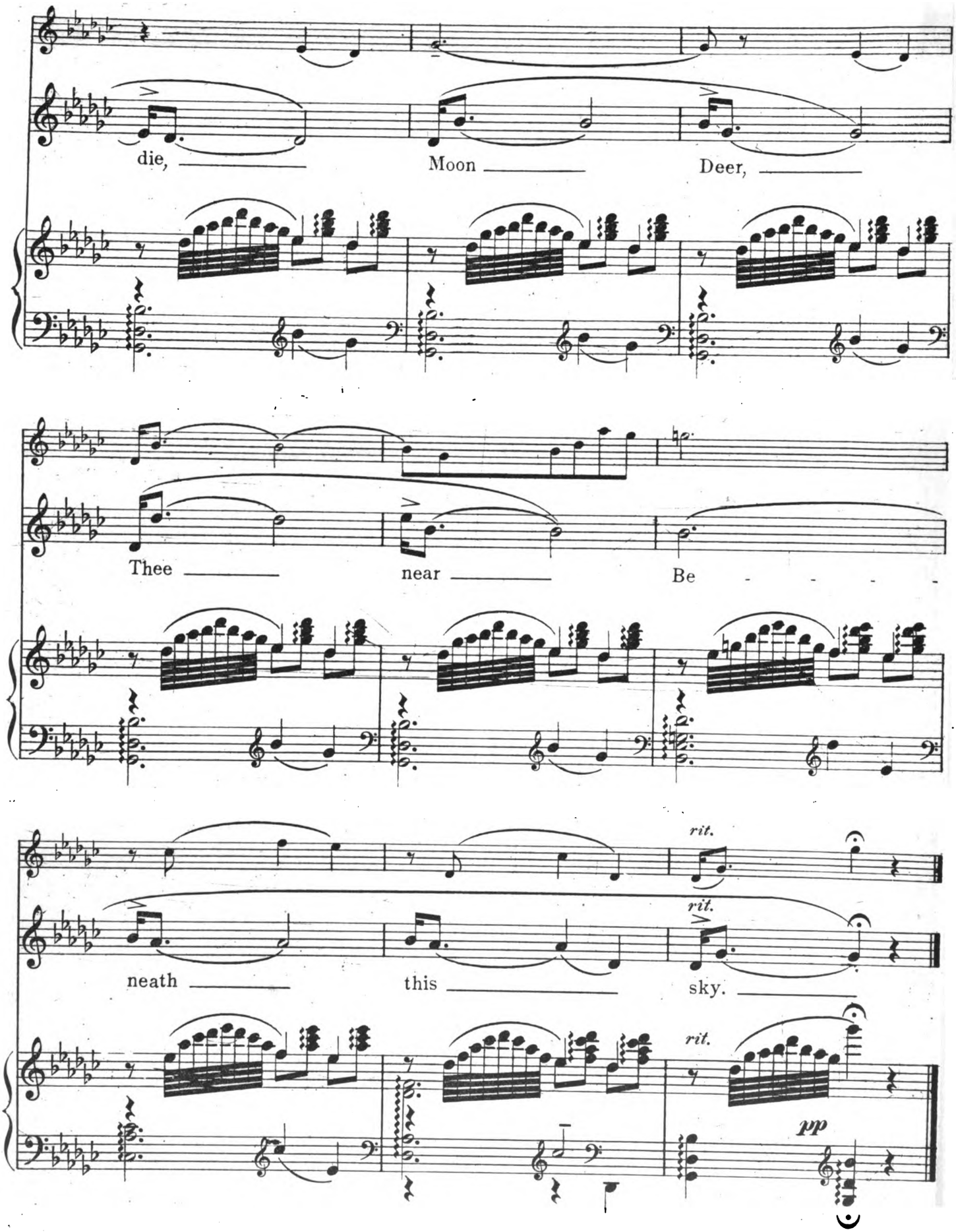

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To Watahwaso

BY THE WEEPING WATERS

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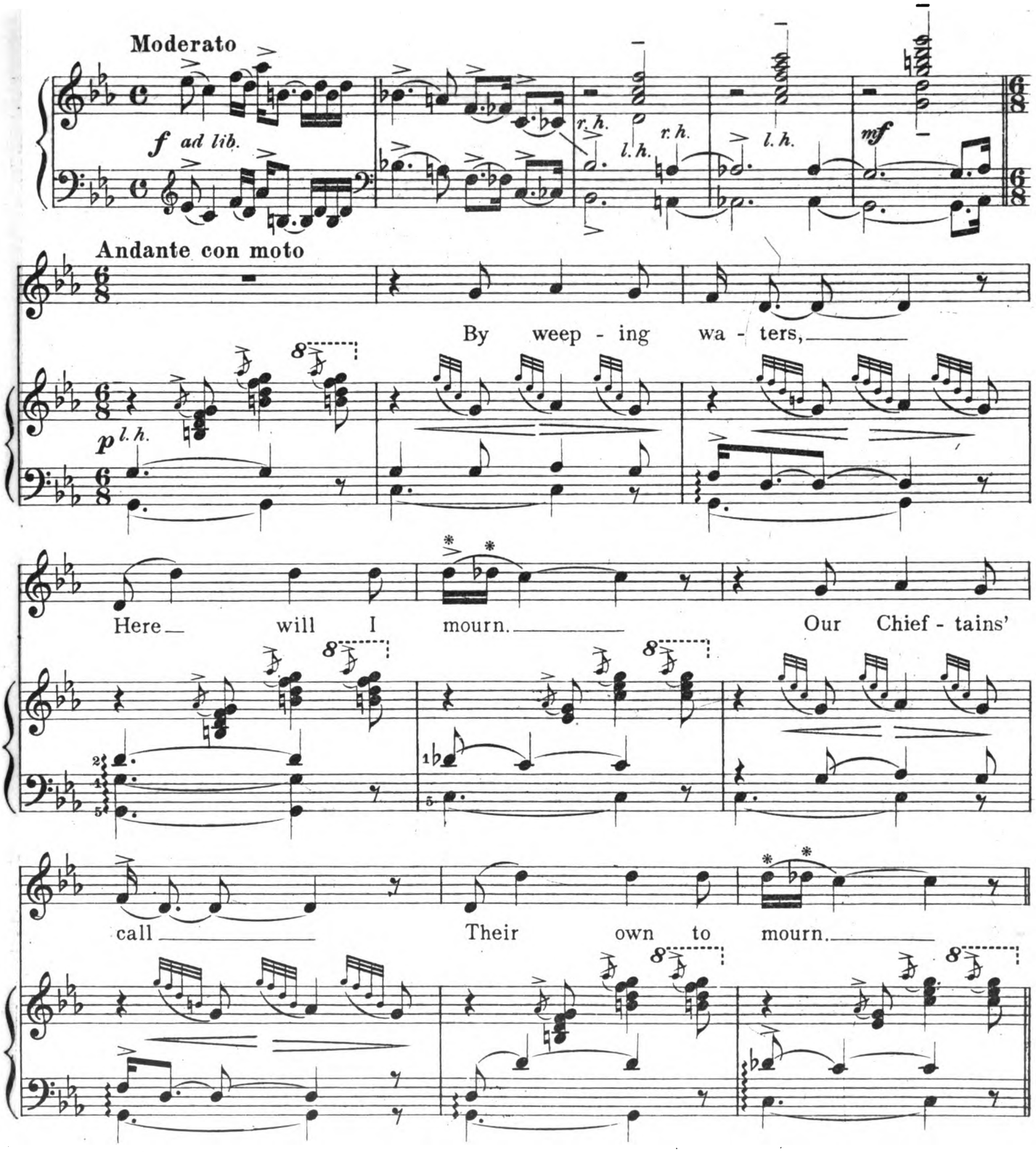
There is an old Indian legend concerning the weeping waters in Minnesota. Years ago Indians from the North drove a party of Sioux warriors across the river above the falls and killed all before they could reach the opposite shore. They say that the water was red with blood and that when it floated over the falls, the waters began to moan. It was a custom for years to go there and mourn with the waters. The squaws would plant the wild roses on the banks below in memoriam. The composition is mostly characteristic with the exception of two fragmentary melodies introduced at the beginning and ending of the composition.



* * For a correct effect try and divide the half tone into quarter tones, producing a wail.

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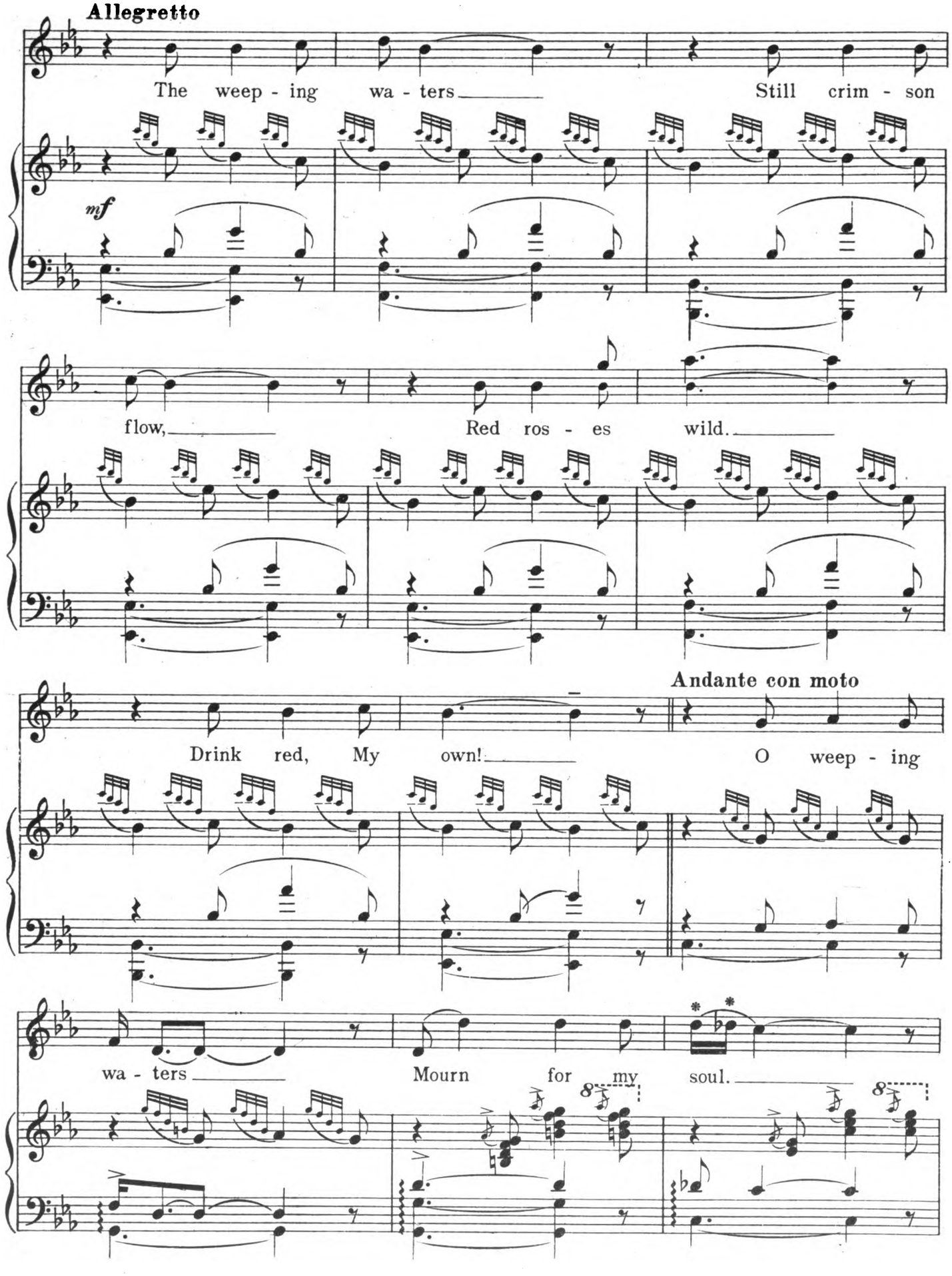

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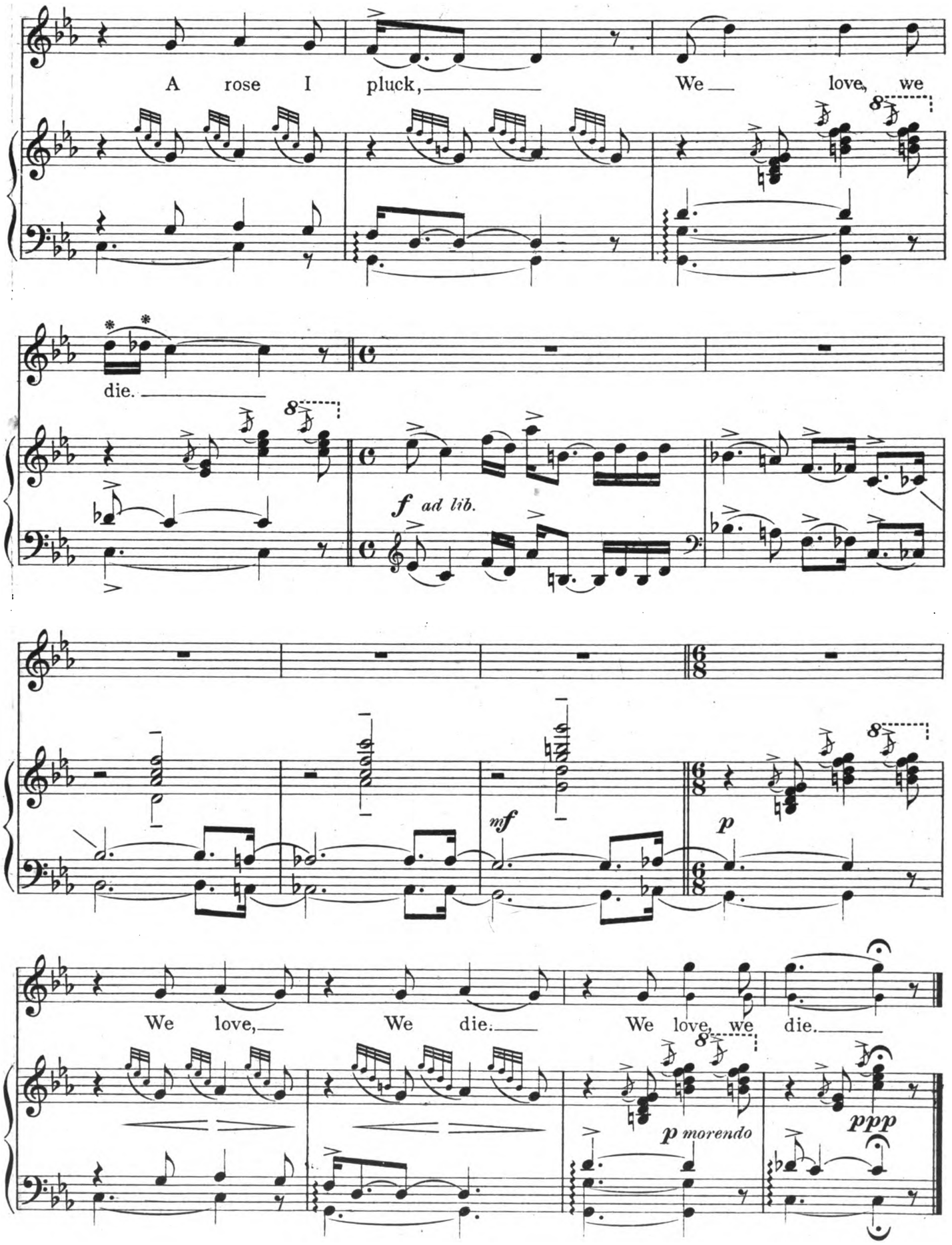

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FROM GHOST DANCE CANYON

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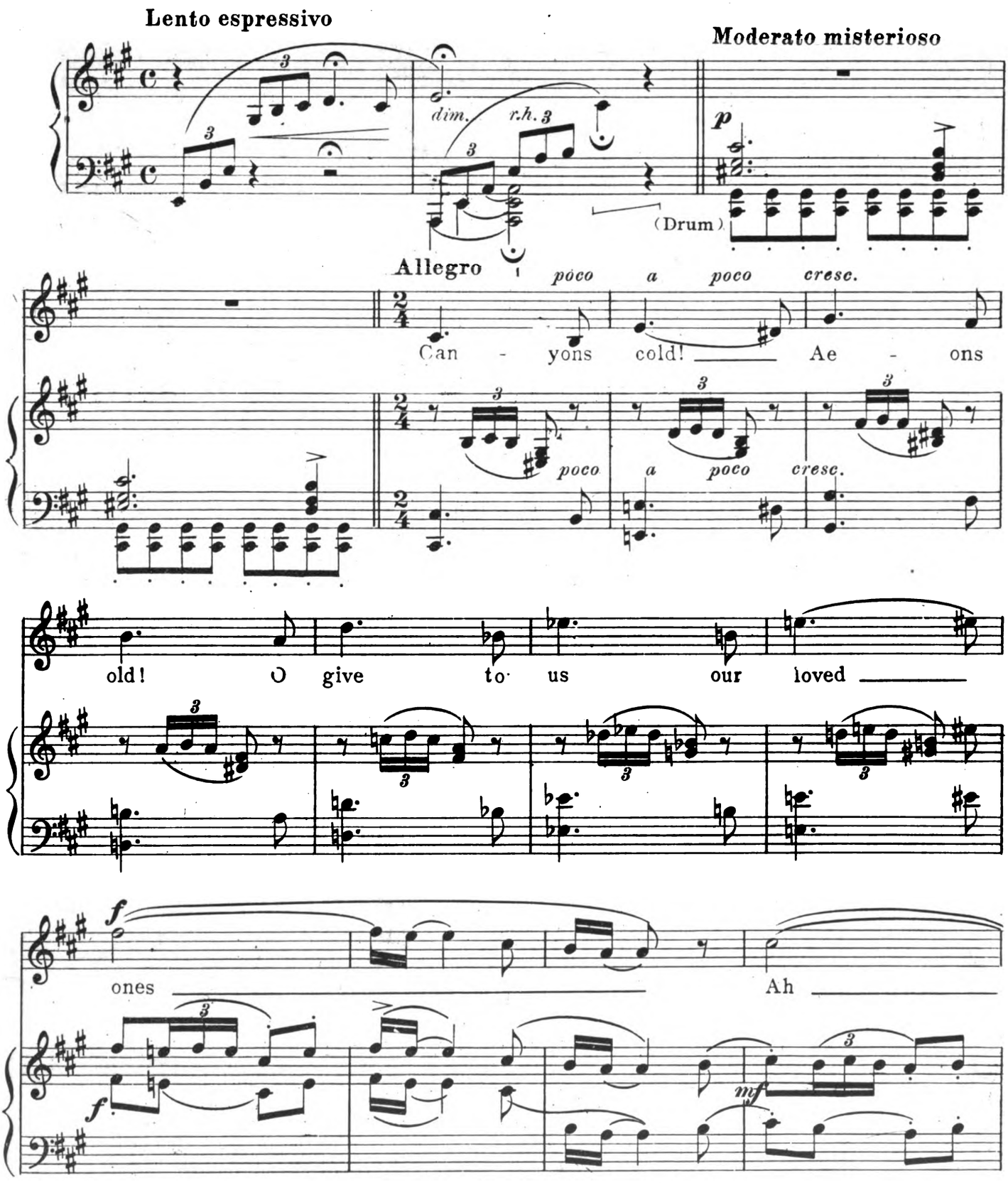

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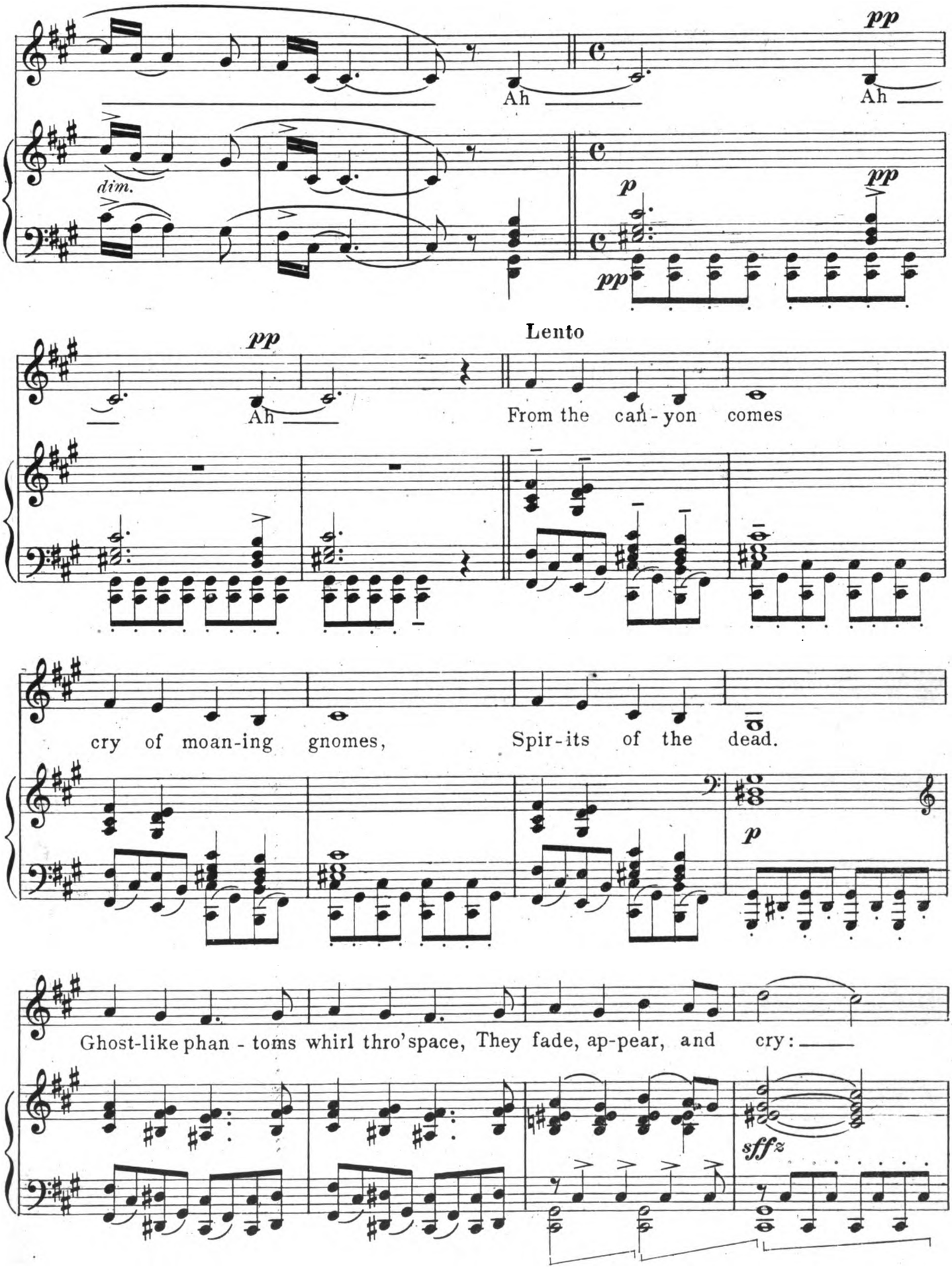

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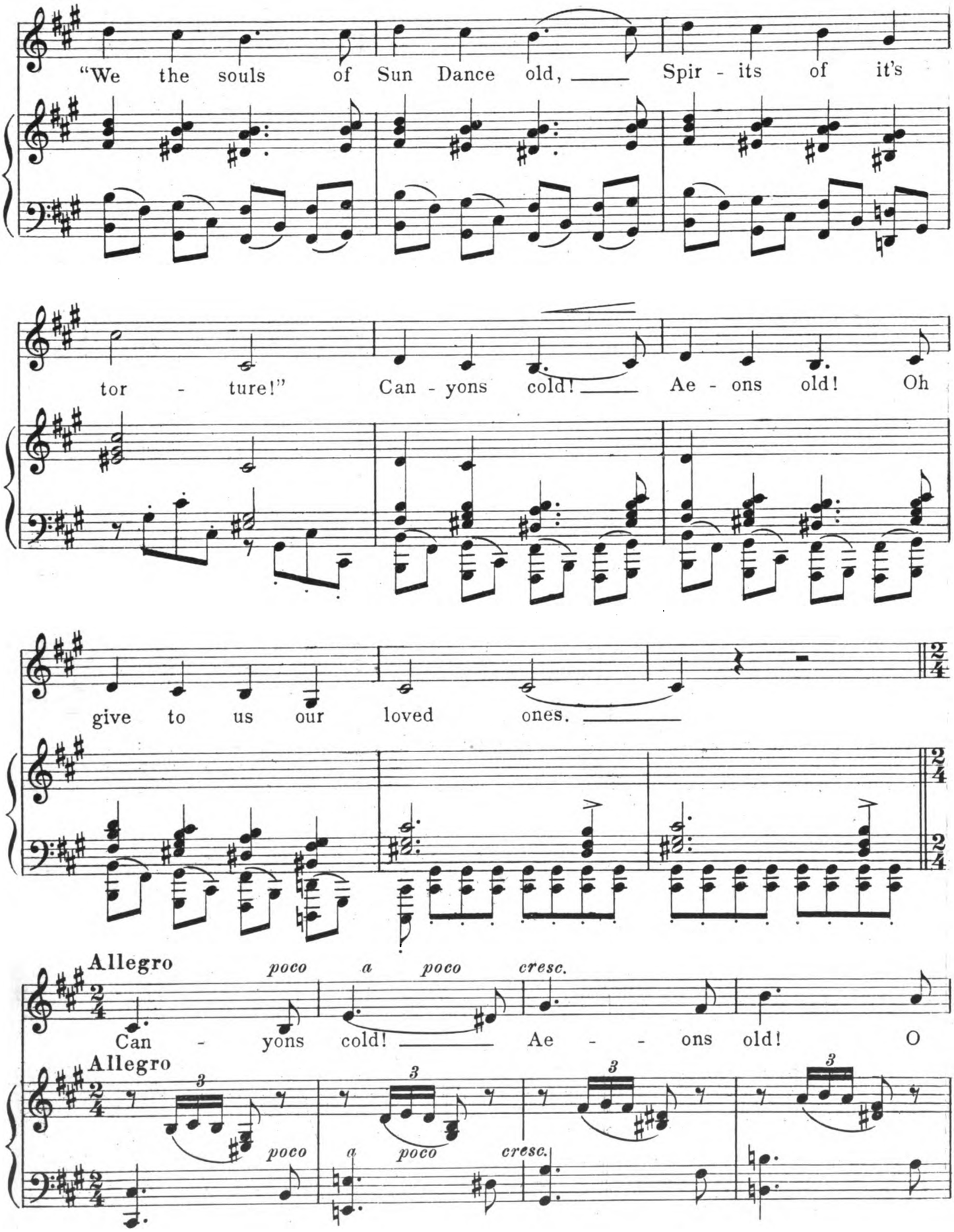

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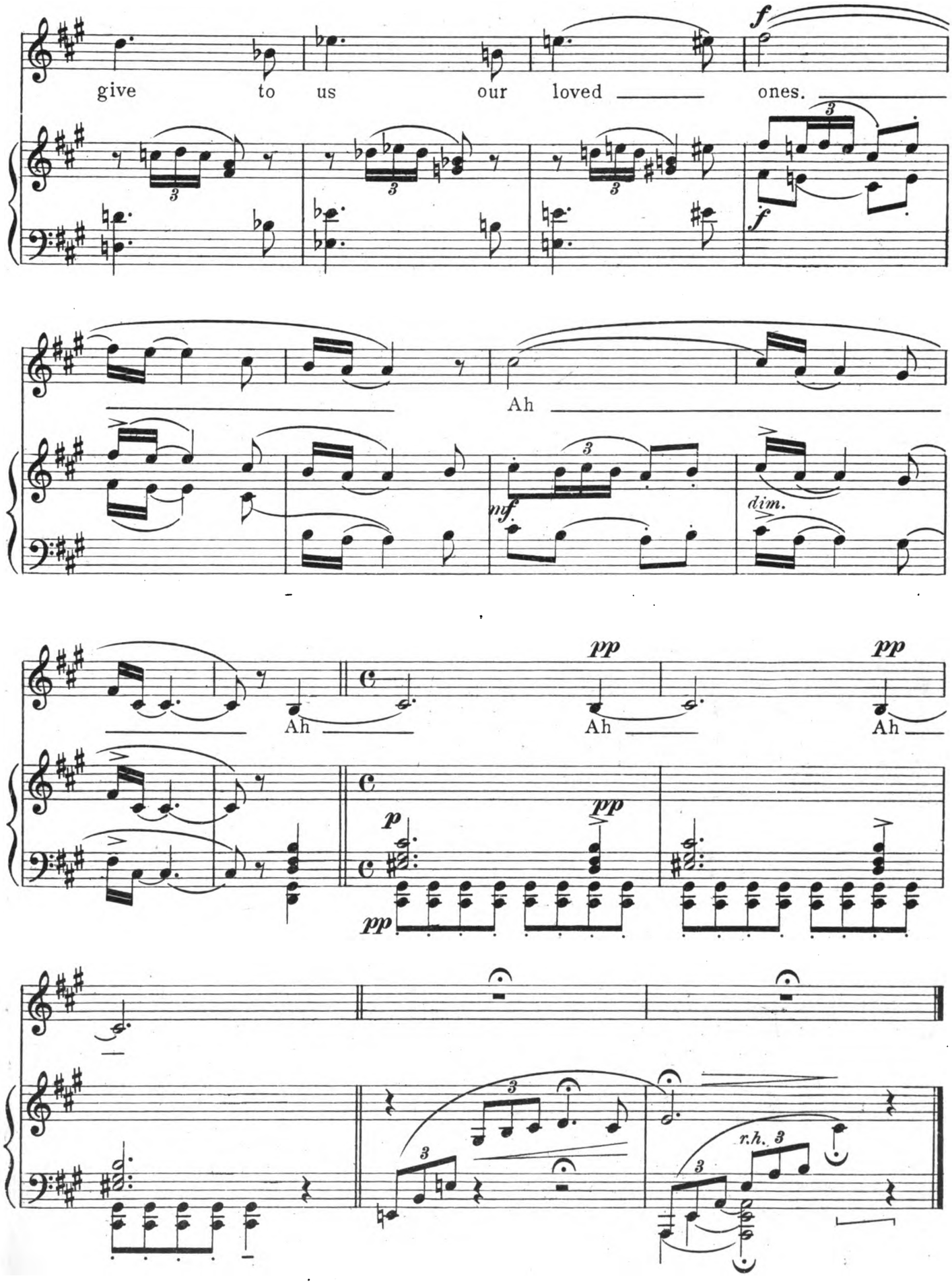

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In Mirrored Waters

Deep in the pine wooded "Black Hills" where the first waters of the great Missouri flow, lived a chieftain of the Sioux. One winter the snows and the ice came until all the game was frozen, famine visited the tribe. Nin-Took, the young chieftain went bravely forth to find a land where the great river led to hunting grounds of plenty. Finally he arrived where the ice began to break and food abounded on all sides. Back he went to his tribe to pilot them to his new country in the south where they might live in contentment: Spring came and he built himself a canoe and paddled up the great Missouri to his home. When he arrived, the ground was carpeted with the bones of his friends and relatives. Haunted with this tragic scene he again embarked in his canoe and drifted down the mighty river to his hunting grounds. As he passed along, the waters on all sides of his tiny craft reflected the faces of his dear ones who had gone on the longer journey to the "Happy Hunting Ground." Thereafter he and all Indians who go in quest of some great purpose but who return too late are called Nin-Took. This legend was secured at first hand by Dr. Edward Lieurance, brother of the composer of this song, who was for many years a surgeon among Indians. The melody is a Sioux melody taken down at first hand by Mr. Thurlow Lieurance from Frank-over-the-Horse, a Sioux.

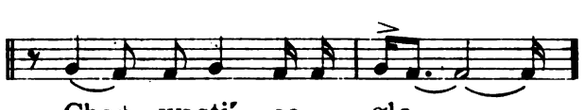
Sēn ta ska We chiṫ Cha la
(Moon Girl) *(Silent ṫ)*

Min nī Lo wüṅ
(Singing Water)

Sin tkä lá lu ta wiṫ
(Red Bird)

Wan bleʹ ska wiṫ
(Wan bliʹ ska wiṫ)
(White Eagle)

Chan wastica gla (Chaṫ wash taʹea gla)
(Farewell)



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IN MIRRORED WATERS

From the Sioux

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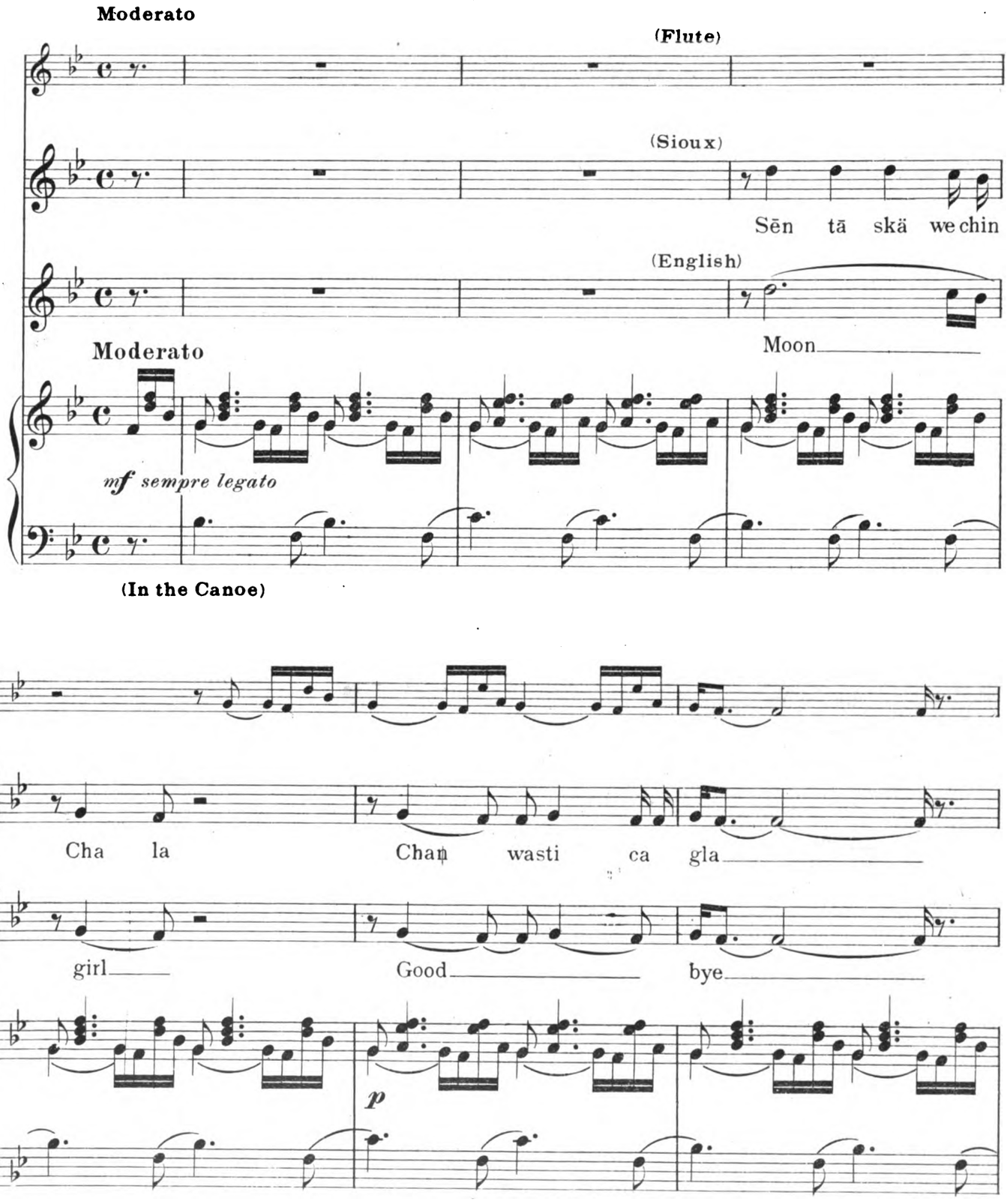

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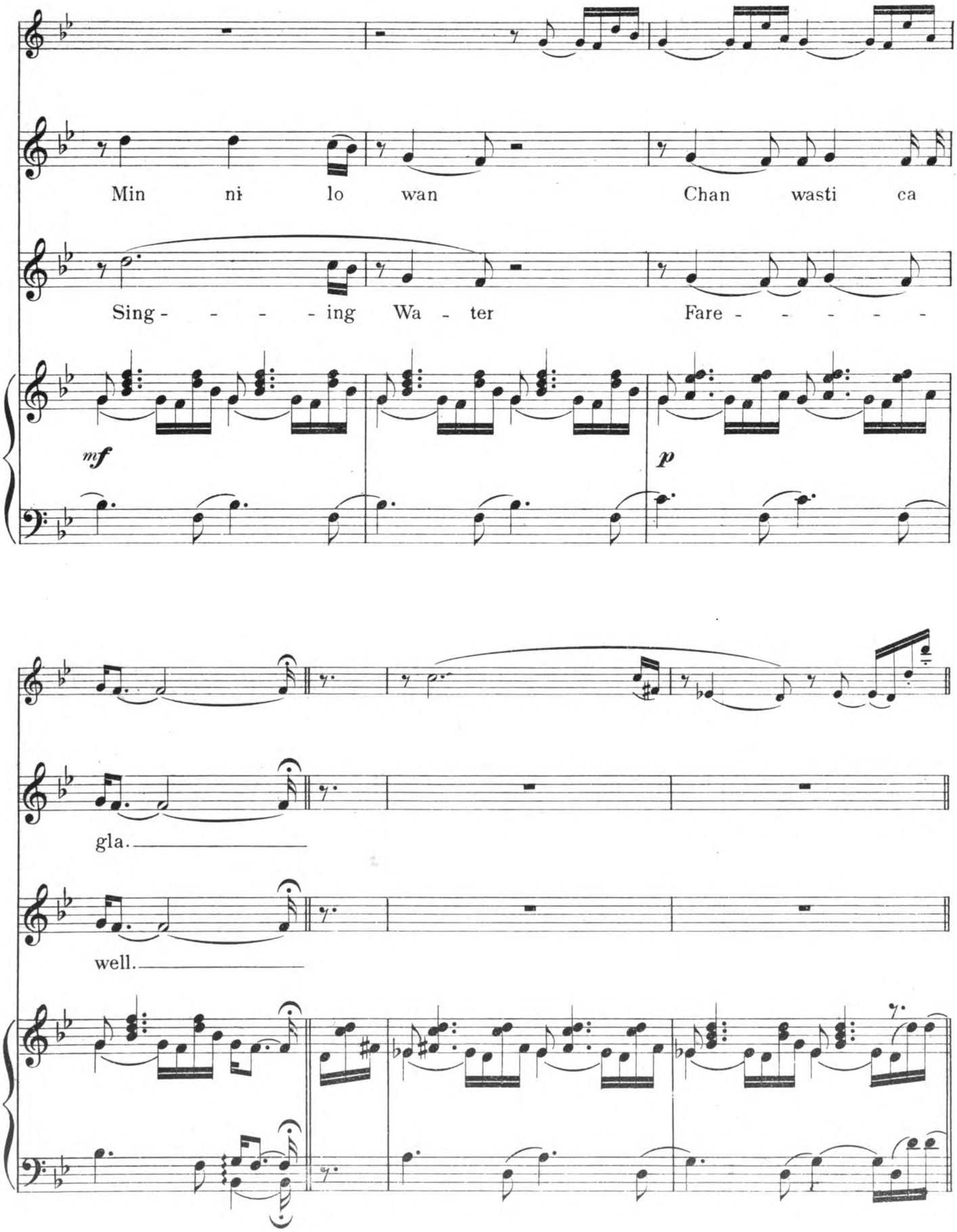

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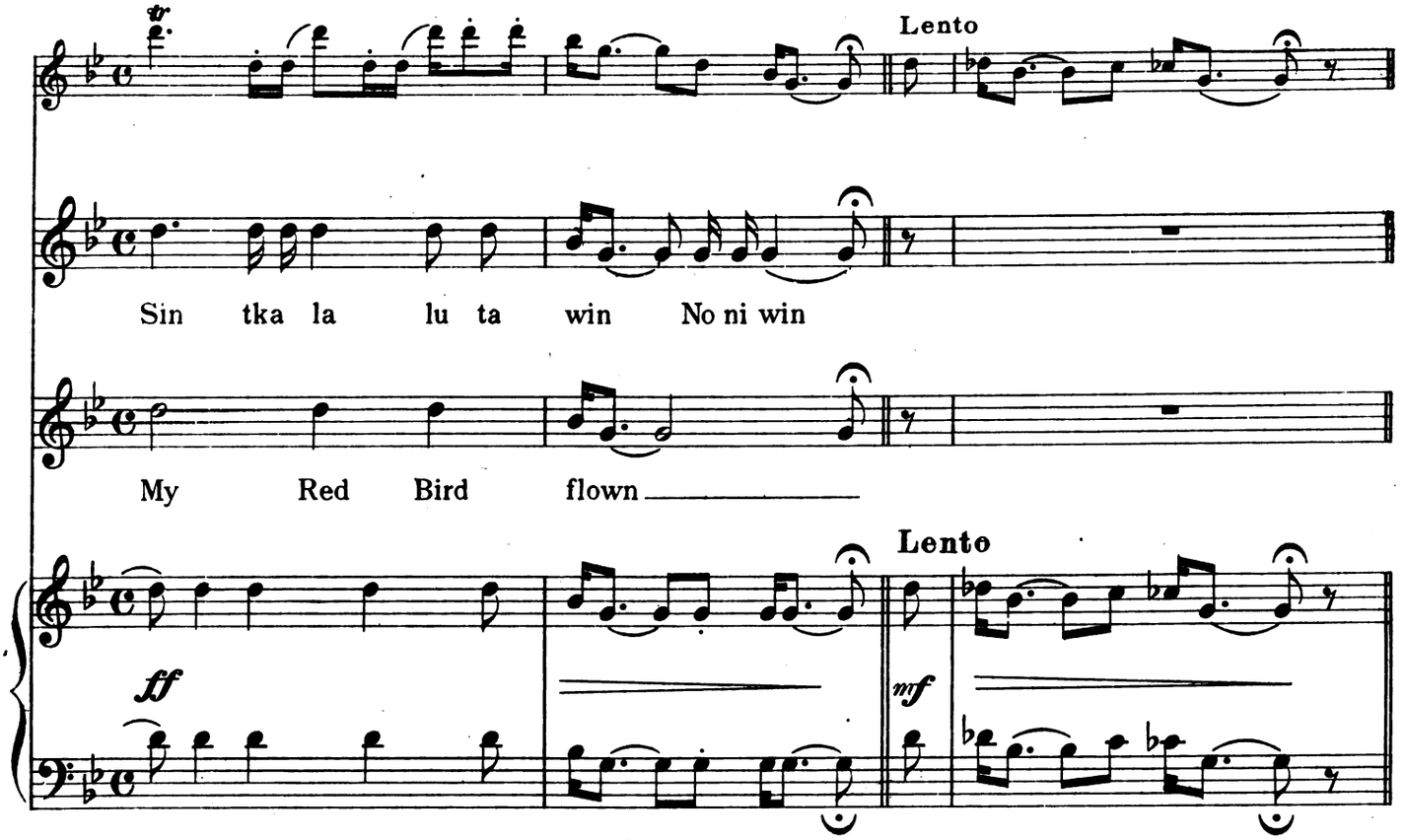

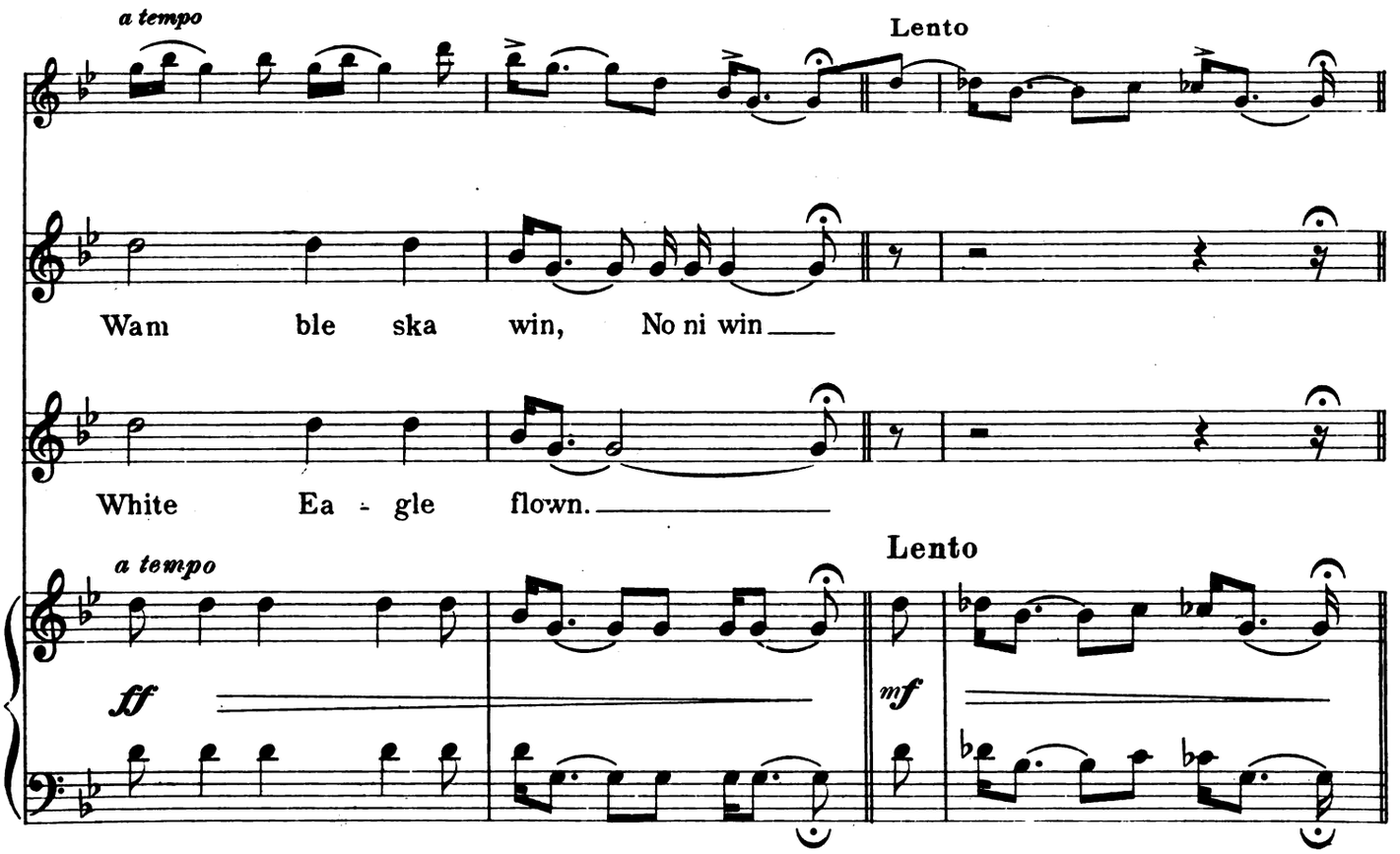

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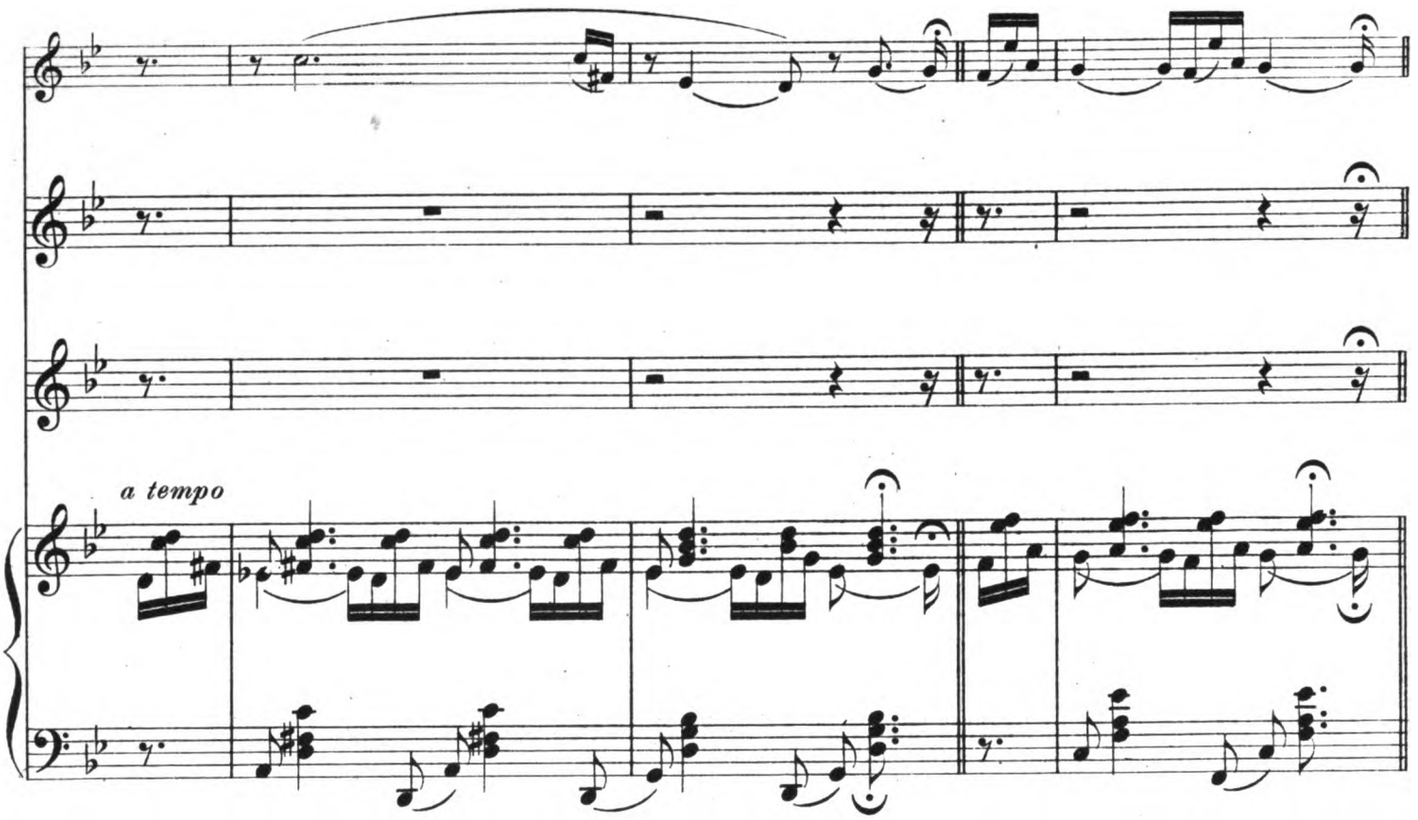

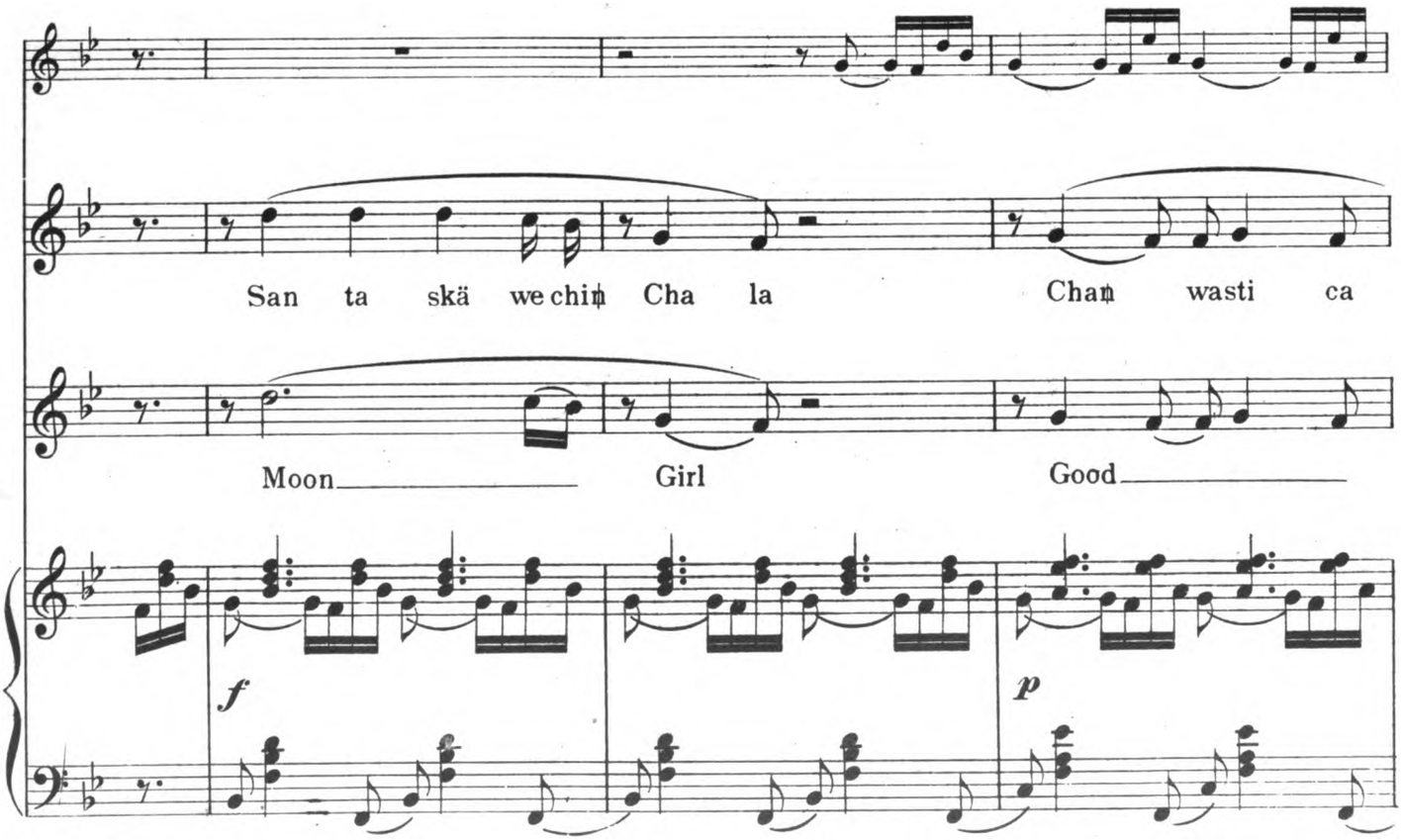

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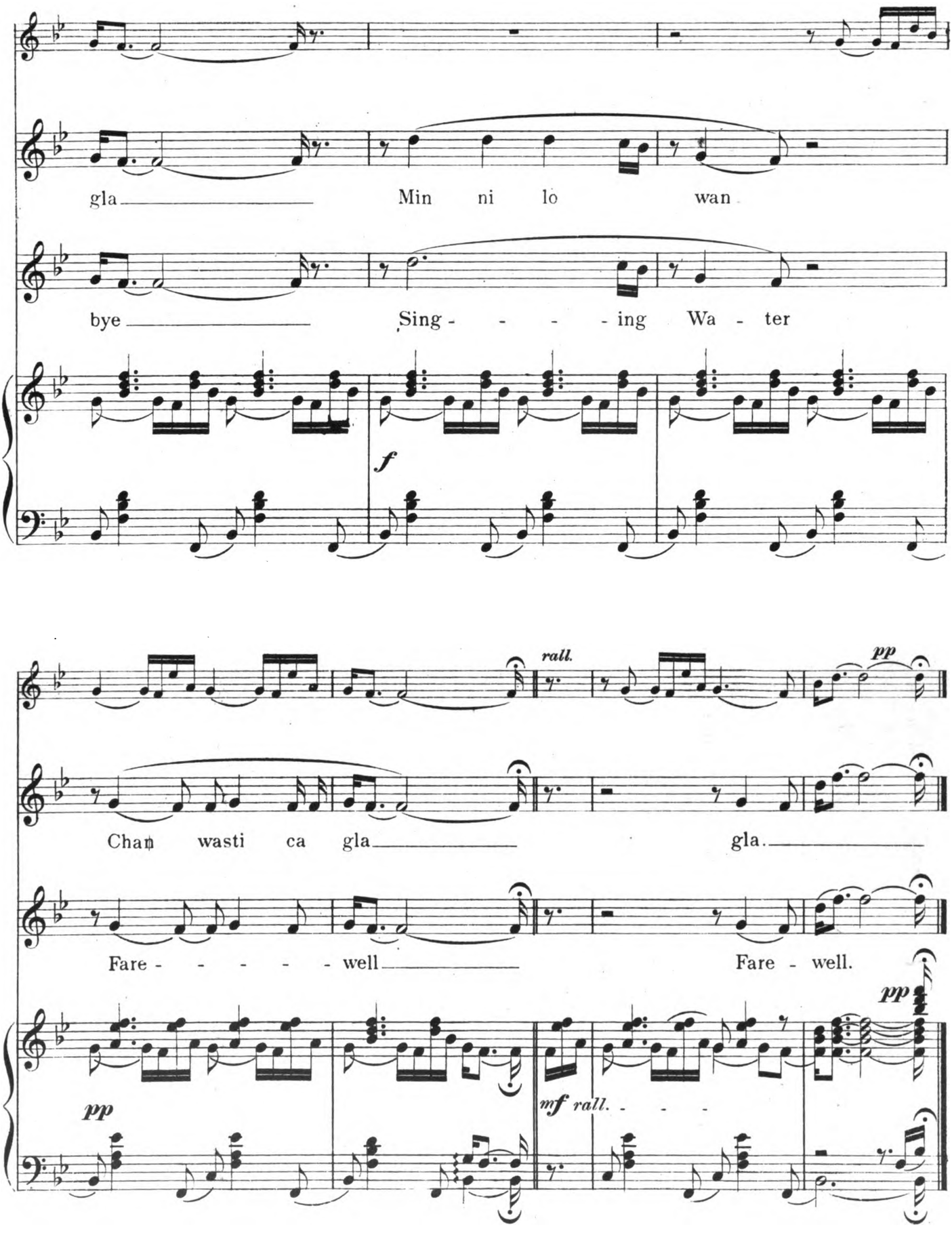

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Respectfully inscribed to Mrs. Frances Elliott Clark

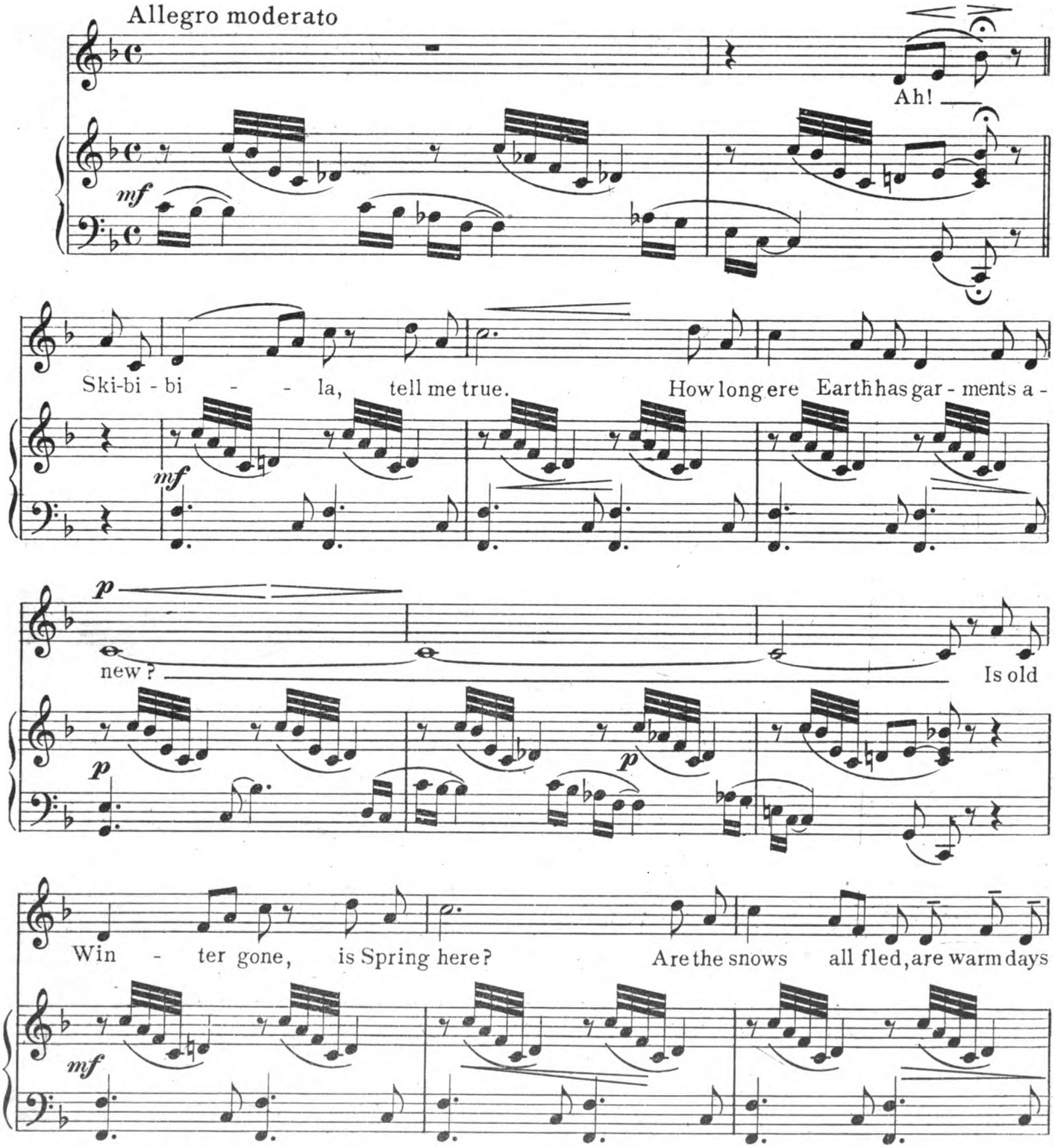
INDIAN SPRING BIRD

SKI-BI-BI-LA

ALFRED FLETCHER — THURLOW LIEURANCE

A small gray bird, spotted like a young robin, with a very black head is much regarded by certain branches of the Sioux. Like our blue bird, it is the herald of Spring, the approach of which is of far greater moment to primitive peoples than to us. When this bird, called by the Indians Ski-bi-bi-la, first appears and is heard by a squaw, she will, in accordance with an ancient custom, pick out a likely boy and send him hastily to talk with the bird, which has a curious way of answering when shouted at. The Sioux believe the bird says, "Has it returned?" (meaning Spring.) The boy must answer "No, it has not returned." Then the bird will fly swiftly back to the sources of Spring, bringing back the longed-for season.

The Indian maidens, following their hearts' promptings ask the little bird another very important question, which will be found in this song.



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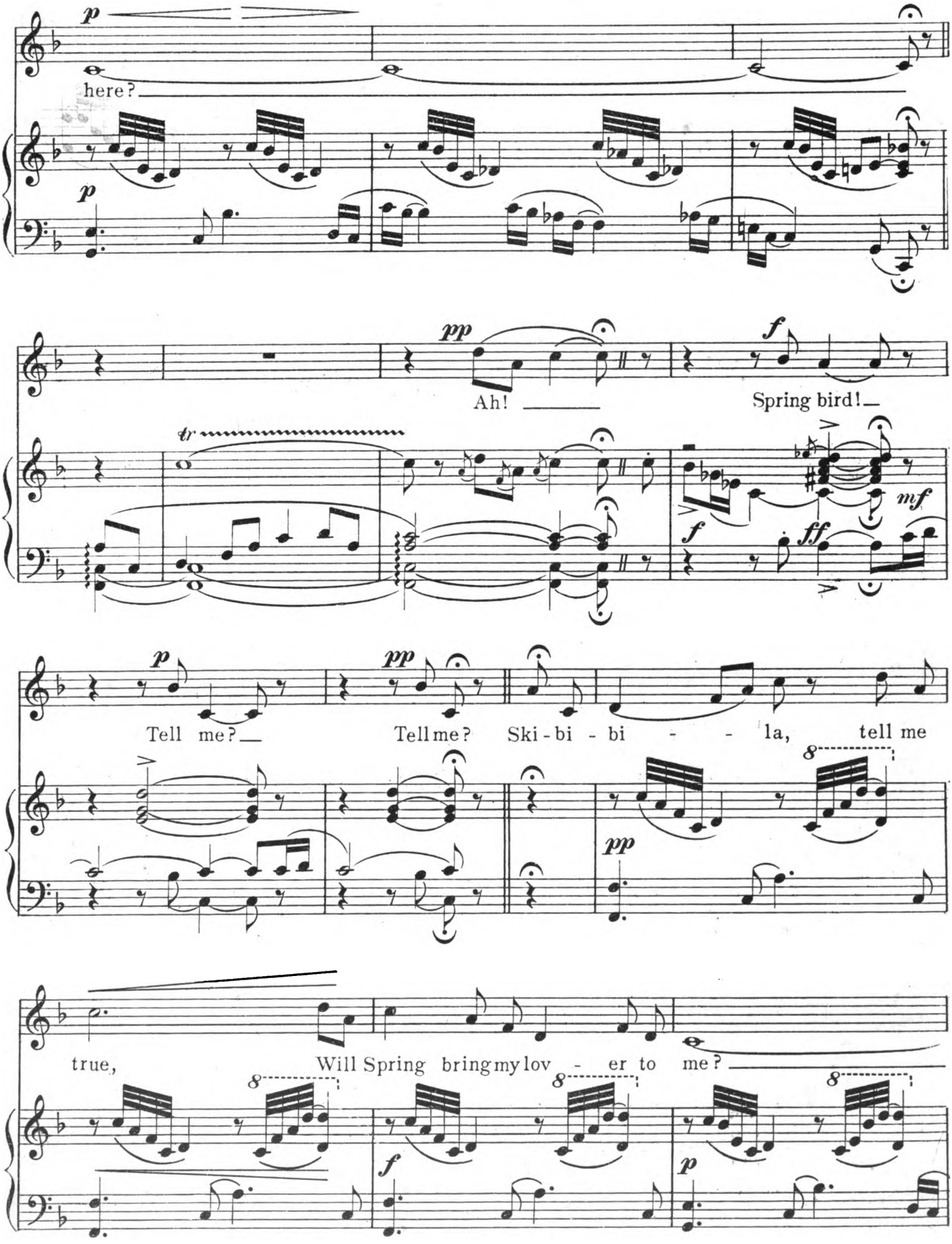

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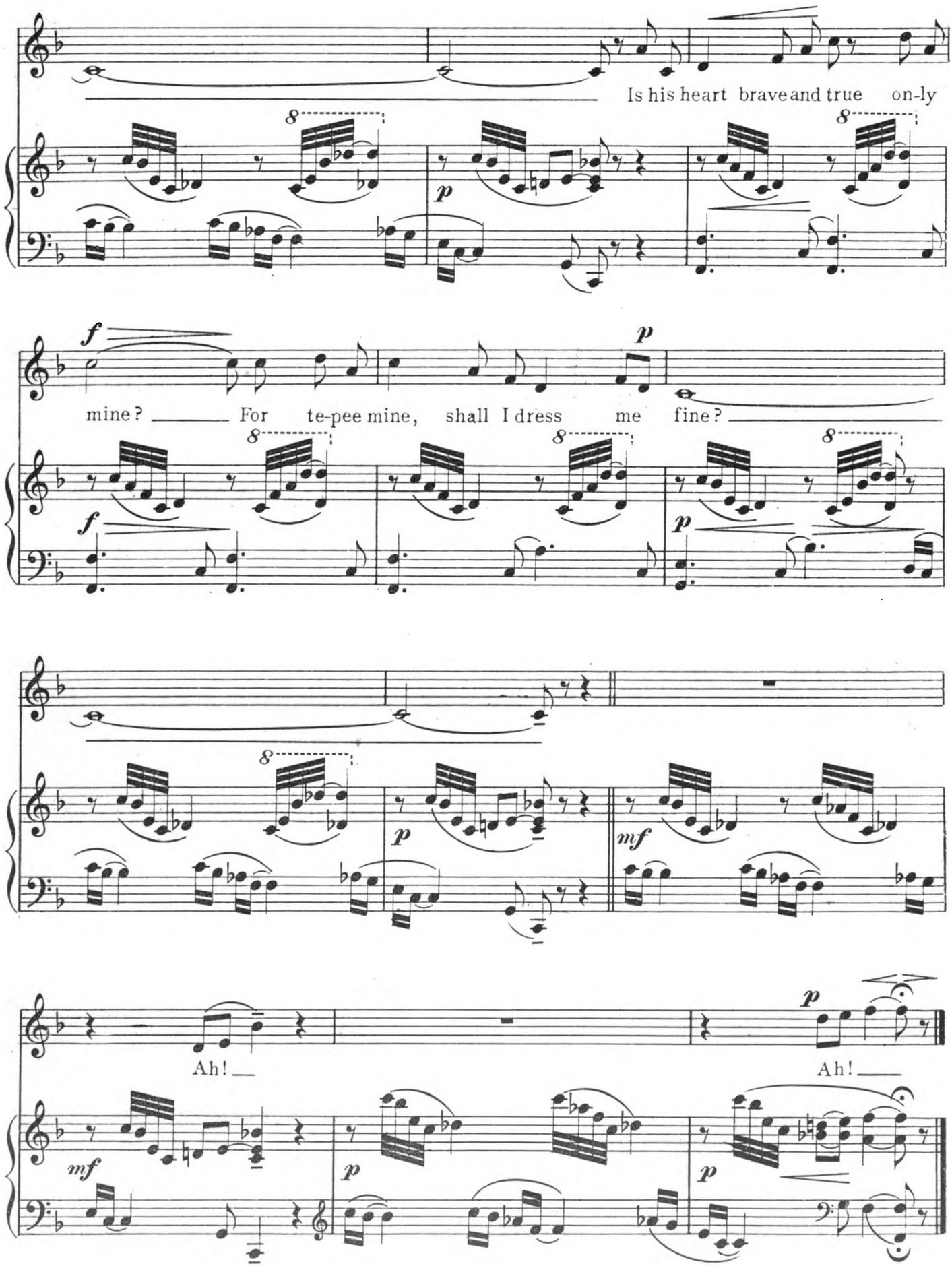

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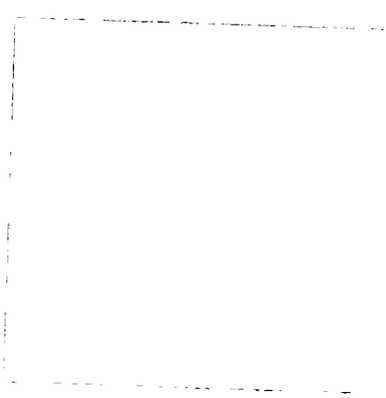

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